

A MANUAL FOR SUNDAYS

F. C. WOODHOUSE.

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A MANUAL FOR SUNDAYS.

*A FEW THOUGHTS FOR EACH SUNDAY
OF THE CHURCH'S YEAR.*

BY

F. C. WOODHOUSE, M.A.

AUTHOR OF "A MANUAL FOR LENT," ETC. ETC.

"I WAS IN THE SPIRIT ON THE LORD'S DAY."



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PREFACE.

WHEN we reckon up the large number of Sermons that are preached every Sunday, and add to them the constant stream of religious books that is ever issuing from the press, we might well doubt whether it is necessary or desirable to publish another volume for Sunday reading.

There are, however, some considerations that seem to prove that we have not yet too many works of this kind. We live in stirring times; truth is ever more and more apprehended; new light is constantly being thrown upon old facts; the enemy "girds himself with a new sword" to attack the faithful servants of GOD; doubt takes forms hitherto unknown; difficulties in the way of Christian belief and practice arise which were not experienced in former times. All this seems to point to the necessity for books written in the full knowledge of these circumstances, and which will not be laid aside by disappointed readers, as utterly unsuited to their wants.

It is also a fact that some books, without being deep or clever, will interest and instruct certain minds which are unaffected by other books that are

in literary power, learning, and spirituality undeniably superior to them. As there are tastes which differ, and one man admires that which another does not care for, or even dislikes, so an author may, unconsciously, present to some readers an attractive aspect of common truths which another cannot give them. Thus Dean Goulburn says: "It is good that Divine Truth . . . should be exhibited under different aspects, reflected under the various angles of incidence at which it strikes various minds. The aspect of it which comes home powerfully to one mind may be expected to attract and influence minds similarly constituted, . . . principally from the reader's finding his own mind to be in touch with the mind of the writer."

If, therefore, an author finds by the general demand of the public, and by personal testimony, often from individuals entirely unknown to him, that his writings are appreciated, and are doing some little good, he may, perhaps, without presumption, continue to give his thoughts to the world, and so "in his vocation and ministry," be it never so humble, do some small work for his LORD and His Church; since in His Kingdom "He hath appointed to every man his work."

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First Sunday in Advent.

THE HUMAN AND THE DIVINE.

ERRATUM.

Page 1, First Sunday in Advent, substitute the following for first sentence—

In our Lord's miracle of feeding the multitude, there is a remarkable mingling together of the divine and the human.

have a marvellously complex nature, that we cannot even understand. Yet the government of the world is, to a large extent, left absolutely in our hands; and

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First Sunday in Advent.

THE HUMAN AND THE DIVINE.

IN the miracle of to-day's Gospel, as in all the other miracles wrought by our LORD, there is a remarkable mingling together of the divine and the human. It is His almighty power that increases the food, and makes it grow under His hand, so as to feed a multitude; but He demands the gift of the store that His disciples had, before He will put forth His creative force. There is enough, and more than enough, for the host of hungry men and women; but He will have all orderly seated, in ranks and bands, before He gives them a morsel. And when the feast is over, He will have no waste. The fragments are carefully collected, to serve for another day's needs. Each loaf and fish must pass through His hands, but the guests receive their portion from the hands of the disciples. "Give ye them to eat," He had said at first; and He makes them do it at last. It is their bread, after all, and they are the distributors; their objections overruled; their inability corrected by His superior power.

And is not this but one instance of an invariable law, in all that we are cognisant of, in the dealings of GOD with man? We find ourselves in the midst of a universe, called into existence, we know not how, only certainly without our aid. We ourselves have a marvellously complex nature, that we cannot even understand. Yet the government of the world is, to a large extent, left absolutely in our hands; and

we are masters of ourselves, to do, and to be, and to become, almost what we like. We acknowledge Almighty GOD to be our Ruler, LORD, and Master, yet we depend one upon another ; child upon parent ; man upon man ; country upon country. Human life is a perpetual giving and receiving. Civilisation and progress depend upon the carrying out of this principle. The savage is independent, like the wild beast ; the cultured man is dependent upon a thousand other men, and upon a dozen distant lands.

Is it any wonder, then, that we find this same principle fundamental in the constitution of the Catholic Church ? We discover the divine and the human ever co-operating. We see human ministry, backed by divine power. We handle our own common things in the particular way that is commanded ; and they are no longer common ; they become endowed with the powers which we name supernatural.

Why did not our LORD remain in the world—universal King, visible Head of the Church ? Because it would have violated this great law. He has put power into the hands of governments and bishops, just as He distributed that food first to His Apostles, and then left it to them to minister to the waiting and wanting crowd. In His parables He compares Himself to a king absent, having delegated his authority to his nobles ; to a great man, who leaves his steward in absolute charge of house, and servants, and property ; to a lord, who divides his wealth among many subordinates, and then goes quite away, and leaves them practically independent, till he returns to reclaim his own, and to reckon with them respecting their use of his valuables.

A great deal that we complain of in Church and State comes through the abuse of this delegated divine power. Our LORD warned us that it would be so. He spoke of buried talents, of unused pounds, of stewards idle, wasteful, immoral, tyrannical, wicked.

But do not individuals abuse their personal liberty in the same way? Medical men tell us that thousands do not die, but are murdered. People murder themselves, by ignorance, by wilful indulgences, by abuse of their powers and functions. People are murdered by one another, by want of care, by selfish neglect, by sheer stupidity. So it is in Church and State; so in parishes and in families. We all depend one upon another, and those who are in positions of authority cannot help doing much harm, or much good, to others, just according as they exercise their power, well or ill. Man's liberty and individuality are never effaced. We know but little of the secret workings of inspiration, but we do not doubt that prophet differed from prophet, and writer from writer; each leaving the mark of his special disposition and character upon the divine message that he delivered. St. Paul and St. John had very different natures, different educations, different views, different methods. They were both apostles, both instruments of the HOLY GHOST in establishing the Catholic Church; but each worked in his own way, free within a wide area of personal liberty.

So it has been with the history of the Church. The Papacy was at one time a great blessing and a source of strength and unity; at another time so tremendous an evil that, but for the inherent grace of God, it would seem as if Christianity itself would have been corrupted and have perished off the face of the earth. In the same way kings and bishops have been instruments of incalculable blessing, or of terrible mischief, to the cause of religion, and to the spiritual life of many souls. Thus the divine and the human are found side by side, and it is hard to say where the boundaries are, where one begins and the other ends.

It is the same within the Church in matters of detail. The two great Sacraments are especial

instances. The common elements, water, bread, and wine, are used as our LORD used the bread and fish in this miracle, by His command endued with supernatural powers by His overruling will. Human hands administer the most ordinary materials, but the LORD of all things and of all men is behind; and He can do all things. Men say, "I will have no man stand between me and my GOD; I want no priest, no rites, no forms." Be it so, if it is possible. But the whole analogy of life is against it. Everything, every person, depends upon something, upon some one else. Wiser men sit down quiet and thankful till their fellow-men, commissioned by their LORD, bring them the food they need; and they would think it unseemly to rush pell mell, or in single presumption, and demand to receive the LORD'S gift at His own hand alone. "I will go out into the sunny fields and look up straight to GOD and commune with Him, without church, or sacrament, or apparatus of worship." Well and good if you can. But, do not forget that there is some one else concerned in this matter besides yourself. It does not rest with you alone. There is GOD'S will to be considered, and if it has pleased GOD to appoint another way, then any self-chosen method must be presumptuous and ineffective. Let us think what GOD is, and what we are, and we shall be a little more modest. "I will read my Bible at home, and so learn GOD'S will and my duty. I want no teacher." And yet how came you by that Bible? Did GOD hand it to you personally direct from heaven in the English language? Did it not rather come to you through men's intervention? Do what you will, there still stands some one, many a one, between you and GOD. For this is His will, and no one can alter it.

Next let us notice the preparation and attitude

of those whom our LORD feeds and satisfies. They are eager for instruction; they forget their daily bread that they may receive the Bread of Life. Those whom our LORD fed went out of their way and tarried long with Him. And when He had compassion, and would feed them, they just did as they were told, and in orderly patience waited their turn. Many Christians are never nourished and blessed in church, simply because they have no spiritual appetite. They do not hunger for the Bread that came down from heaven. There were five thousand fed by our LORD, but how many thousands were there who were not fed? There were crowds going up to Jerusalem; the majority toiled on unrefreshed.

Our LORD says, "Blessed are they who hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled." Many stay away from church because they have no appetite for spiritual food. Many come and go empty away for the same reason. But, "He filleth the hungry with good things;" they eat and are filled; their faintness is gone; they are ready now to go on their journey to Jerusalem to worship and to sacrifice. So it is in our churches. They are, after all, but resting-places by the way. We come and go. Presently our faces are no more seen, and others are there instead. But all have "their faces set as though they would go to Jerusalem;" they who distribute as well as those who receive the Bread pass away, and others stand in their place. It is well. It must be so. Our LORD Himself sent the multitude away as soon as He had fed them; sent them all the same way, all to Jerusalem. In rank and order, no doubt, as they had sat down, so they were marshalled onwards; no confusion, nothing by chance. The particular disciple that broke the bread for some particular company did not remain always with that company; his work was done; he went his

way, they theirs. Only all went to Jerusalem. There they met again. So Christian pastors do their work and pass away; but they and their people hope to meet again in the city of GOD.

Shall we not try and regard our churches, our Sundays, our services, thus? We, the set-apart ministers, shall we lift up ourselves because of our office? GOD forbid. What are we but the disciples with hands full of food, given to us to distribute to our fellow-Christians? What room for pride, then? "Ourselves your servants," "ministers of CHRIST," "stewards of the mysteries of GOD," and you, all and each, ministers too; for there is a priesthood of the Laity. Every one receives the gift; every one ministers to his neighbour. Picture that crowd. The man receives the bread, and shares it with his wife; the mother feeds her little ones, before she tastes herself; the sick, the aged, the blind, there is some kind hand to receive for them, to give to them. Yes, it is so still; the true disciple, whose hands are full, does not go away and eat all by himself. He knows that he has received, simply that he may give to those whom His LORD intends to feed. What is that I see in your hands? Money. Your master gave it you, not to be hoarded, not to be squandered, but to be well used. He gave to His disciples, that they might give to the multitude. He has given us all something; we must distribute His gifts, as the disciples distributed the loaves and fishes.

Here, in a nutshell, is the rule of Christian conduct—mutual dependence, mutual help; CHRIST'S rule for the Church, for each congregation, for each faithful soul. "To every one his work"—work for GOD; work for others; work for self; and the last best done by those who do the other two most truly. Ah, high and noble rule of life; sure road to happiness and peace—for selfishness is the chief cause of unrest. We go on learning our religion. Years

pass ; we have sufferings and disappointments ; we have joys and pleasant times ; we have dark times, and doubts and perplexities. There are changes, sad losses, tearful partings. Life seems very complex ; we get bewildered sometimes. And then there comes a quiet, soft light, and the mists clear away ; and duty seems plain and simple ; and all the manifold obligations and conflicting calls and claims seem to merge in one obvious rule of life—the old childish rule that a Christian mother taught us, as the Church, our true mother, taught her, "To do to all men as I would they should do unto me." And there stands before us the Man CHRIST JESUS, our Pattern, our Helper ; ready to guide us ; ready to pardon our poor failures ; bidding us put our whole trust in Him in life's strange mazes, and in the dark and pathless valley of the shadow of death.

Second Sunday in Advent.

THE RIGHT USE OF HOLY SCRIPTURE.

THE Church turns the words of the Epistle into a prayer in the Collect to-day, so especially drawing our attention to the right use of Holy Scripture. Following the Apostle, she tells us that the sacred Books are put into our hands "for our learning," *i.e.*, in modern phraseology, for our instruction; also to teach us patience, and to give us comfort. St. Paul is referring to the Old Testament; the Church, of course, includes the New Testament in her adoption of his words. St. Paul quotes a prophecy respecting the suffering MESSIAH as an argument for patience under the ills of life, and for holding fast the Christian hope. The Church, with the full story of the Gospels in her hands, setting forth CHRIST in all the details of His life and Passion, may well bid us "read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest," that CHRIST may be formed in us, and His likeness displayed in our words and deeds.

When we read what devout men say respecting the Old Testament Scriptures, the love they express for them, the time they give to meditation upon them, night and day, the careful searching in them for their hidden treasures, the comfort and help they find in them, we are sometimes amazed, and fail to follow them, and to enter into their enthusiasm. The New Testament is so infinitely clearer, deeper, wider, that the Old Testament—except, perhaps, the Psalms—seems by comparison uninteresting, unedi-



fying ; just as the living face makes the portrait look hard and cold ; just as the sun makes lamps and candles dim and dull. But St. Paul, with the full knowledge of the Gospel revelation, still writes of the comfort and instruction to be gathered by Christians from the Old Testament books.

Our Church of England, more than any other Church, ancient or modern—and certainly far more than any of the Protestant sects—teaches her children to love the Word of God, and to become familiar with its contents. Besides the daily recitation of the Psalms, and the Epistles and Gospels for Sundays and holy days, there are four portions read every day in her public services. She has translated the whole Bible, and put it trustingly into the hands of all, knowing that although, like every other good thing, it may be misused and abused, yet esteeming its right use too precious to be foregone on that account.

For assuredly the Bible has been, and is, misused —its meaning perverted, its words wrested to men's destruction, and to the Church's own grievous hurt. In old time the Gnostics, the Arians, the Pelagians, and all the other impugners of the Catholic faith, found, as they professed and believed, countenance for their novelties and errors in the Holy Scriptures ; and the wildest and most extravagant sectarian of modern times still comes forth, Bible in hand, boldly and confidently claiming it on his side, and that he alone understands its meaning, and has for the first time been its true exponent and teacher. Nay, more, Satan himself, when he confronted our LORD, backed his temptations by quotations from Holy Scripture, and his example has been followed many a time since.

"The devil can cite Scripture for his purpose.
An evil soul producing holy witness
Is like a villain with a smiling cheek,
A goodly apple rotten at the heart."

And so it has been sneeringly said of the Bible—

“Hic liber est in quo querit sua dogmata quisque,
Invenit pariter dogmata quisque sua.”

That is to say, every one turns to Scripture to look for support for his particular theory, and finds what he looks for.

But surely this is not only a misuse of Holy Scripture, but a total misconception of its nature, and the purpose for which it has been given to us. It is not a storehouse of raw material, out of which any one who likes can construct a religion for himself. CHRIST did not, like Mahomet, write a book. He Himself is the revelation of truth and of GOD. His Church was founded and spread, long before a single book of the New Testament was written. Those books were penned by their authors, not to teach men the Christian religion, but for the comfort and edification of those who were already Christians. So St. Luke addresses his Gospel to Theophilus, who had “already been instructed” as to all things which it contained. The Church’s system is not categorically laid down in the New Testament, but the existence of such a system is assumed, and is alluded to as “the faith,” “the doctrine of CHRIST,” and so on. And so St. Paul says, “I praise you that ye keep the traditions that I delivered to you;” and of new questions as they arose, “The rest will I set in order, when I come.” And St. John, “I will not with ink and pen write unto thee, but I trust I shall shortly see thee, and we shall speak face to face.” The apostles and first missionaries of CHRIST did not set out with a book in their hands; for books were scarce, and those who could read were few, and there was as yet no Bible for them to read; but they went out in the power of the HOLY GHOST, to gather men into CHRIST’S kingdom by faith in Him, and by being baptized into the Name of the

Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. St. Paul, when he enumerates the gifts of the Spirit, makes no mention of writers, or of books. When our LORD bade the Jews "search their Scriptures," it was that they might find there His own credentials, as their sole Teacher; not that they might find in them the truth for themselves, without a Divine Teacher. Indeed they had already failed to use their Scriptures rightly, for, unlike the Ethiopian eunuch, they had presumed upon their own judgment, and had not asked for a divine teacher to guide them. As time went on, and books were written, the Church decided which should be received as canonical, and which should be rejected. There were many Gospels, besides the four in our Bibles. There were many Epistles and other books, which were read in particular Churches, and gradually set aside, the Acts and Passions of martyrs, the lives of local saints, the letters of holy bishops and missionaries. It was the Church, by the power of the indwelling Spirit of GOD, that decided what was and what was not the Word of GOD; and it was, and is, the Church alone, by the power of the same Spirit of GOD, that can tell the true meaning of Scripture. To hear some foolish people talk one would suppose that the English translation of the Bible had been handed down straight from heaven, written with the finger of GOD, like the tables of the old Law at Sinai. One memorable pronouncement remains still in print, to astonish all learned and thoughtful men. A Dean of the Church of England was the author of the astounding statement, that every book of the Bible, every chapter, every verse, nay, every word, was inspired, and to be received as the infallible voice of God! Putting aside the difficulties that surround our study of the Hebrew originals of the Old Testament, and the variations between them and the ancient Septuagint version, we have no

manuscript of any book of the New Testament older than the fourth century ; and the various readings, as any student knows, are numerous enough to show that no verbal inspiration is possible. Nor was it ever maintained by the primitive Church. The earliest Christian writers quote the Gospels quite loosely, without any regard for literal accuracy. It was men not books that were inspired, and the living Church never silenced her voice in deference to a dead book. It was not till the error of Papal Infallibility had been foisted upon the Church, and then rejected by the inexorable logic of facts and reason, that this novel theory of Bible Infallibility was invented. Men had so long accepted the fallacy that an infallible guide was essential to the Church, that when they could no longer so regard the Pope, they looked hither and thither for a substitute, and thought they found it in the Bible ; and what has been called Bibliolatry became an error, as Mariolatry had been an error before. Then came the age of criticism, and because this theory was found to be untenable, men gave up all belief, and railed against Christianity with rancorous bitterness. In the same way it had been assumed that the Bible was a scientific and literal record of the history of the earth, and of the primeval ages ; and when discoveries were made, or theories and systems invented, that seemed not altogether to agree with what men supposed that the Bible taught, then again there set in a fashion of scepticism, which threatened to end in mental chaos and ruin.

It is to be hoped that this has passed away, and that a right view of the nature and use of the Holy Scriptures will save us from such misery, and them from dishonour. The belief in gravitation, and in the earth's motion round the sun, was once thought to be contrary to the teaching of the Bible. No one thinks so now. If the same amount of evidence is

found in favour of Evolution, and other modern scientific theories, they will doubtless be accepted also, without prejudice to the Christian's reverence for Holy Scripture. So Charles Kingsley said—“Evolution only asserts that the Creator bears the same relation to the whole universe as to every individual man, whose body is developed by natural laws.” And another writer says that the order of the work of the seven days might have been given in 5040 different ways, whereas they accord with the general system laid down by the present state of geological discovery. “The locks of Messrs. Hobbs are so made that no two are alike. A lock with fifteen levers may be varied 1,307,674,368,000 times. Moses has placed fifteen events in their proper order.” And as regards textual accuracy, Tischendorf has said—“Providence has ordained for the New Testament more sources of the greatest antiquity than are possessed by all the old Greek literature together.” There is no historical event that can justly be believed, if we reject the narratives of the New Testament. “The same degree of certainty is not required in historical as in judicial evidence, or we should be logically compelled to withhold our belief from nine-tenths of historical facts, about which we really have no doubt at all. Every day we act upon evidence which would be rejected in a court of justice.” “The Bible,” said that profound thinker, Mr. Hinton, “is as large as Nature, and as deep and simple, and must be dealt with in the same way. If you do not understand a fact in nature, you do not fidget yourself; so you need not expect to understand every passage of the Bible. It is not a book for one man, or for one age, but for all.” And the late Professor Mozley wrote—“In human affairs it is considered the highest wisdom to accommodate instruction to the imperfect knowledge of the learner, and, at the same time, plant a seed of more perfect knowledge. This is

just the history of divine revelation. The morality of a progressive revelation must be judged by the end to which it leads. The Law taught the ignorant and degraded Jews to become Christians. All other religious systems stopped short of any development in morals. Man's mind cannot be enlightened all at once by revelation. The laws of man's being require gradual advance. As well judge a sculptor by a broken chip of stone, as GOD by Old Testament incidents." "The eye, not the ear, is the organ to receive light; so perhaps the understanding is not the faculty which receives from GOD the knowledge of His existence and His attributes, but the conscience, which judges the understanding, and is therefore its superior." "The progress of the human race in spiritual knowledge, unlike its progress in scientific knowledge, has been due, not to thinkers intellectually gifted, but to prophets inspired by GOD; just as the progress of spiritual knowledge in every human soul depends upon communion with GOD." "Whatever Christianity revealed, it is certain that it left much unrevealed. It is by a slow process that the world learns all that the New Testament contains. Though the stars do not develop, astronomy does. Christianity may not change, but man's understanding of it may." "If the doctrine of the resurrection lay hid in the words, 'I am the GOD of Abraham,' why may not other doctrines still lie hidden in equally obscure references?" "The most searching criticism of the New Testament by sceptics has resulted in its establishment as historically accurate. The easiest thing would have been to have declared it a forgery, like the Decretals; but no one dreams of this. Hence mythical and other theories are invented to explain it away."

We come back then to that with which we started; that the Bible is GOD'S Word to our souls, but that it must be used as GOD intended it to be used, with

fear, reverence, humility; as Bishop Jewel says, "The Scriptures are the mysteries of GOD; let us not be curious; let us not seek to know more than GOD hath revealed by them. They are the sea of GOD; let us take heed we be not drowned in them. They are the fire of GOD; let us take comfort by their heat, and warily take heed they burn us not. They that gaze over hardly upon the sun, take blemish in their eyesight." GOD'S holy Word, if rightly used, read, marked, learned, and inwardly digested, will teach us patience with the ills of life, and give us comfort under their painful pressure. It is powerful and "quick," that is, it is endued with life, to adapt itself to circumstances and to different persons, and to enable them always to have "the hope;" for such are St. Paul's words.

Blessed are the eyes that see the things that we see. If prophets and righteous men found the Old Testament Scriptures so precious, what should they be to us, when the light of Pentecost illuminates them, and we see Christ everywhere? And what should the New Testament be that sets forth CHRIST evidently before our eyes, so that we seem to live in His company, see His face, and hear His words, till our hearts burn within us.

So we read in one of the Homilies, "If one could show but the print of CHRIST'S Foot, a great number would fall down and worship it. But to the Holy Scriptures, where we may see daily, if we will, I will not say the print of His Feet only, but the whole shape and lively image of Him, alas, we give but little reverence, or none at all. If any could let us see CHRIST'S coat, a sort of us would make hard shift except we might come nigh to gaze upon it, yea, and kiss it too; and yet all the clothes that ever He did wear can nothing so truly, nor so lively, express Him unto us as do the Scriptures. CHRIST'S images made in wood or stone or metal, some men,

for the love they bear to CHRIST, do garnish and beautify them with pearl of gold and precious stone ; and should not we, good brethren, much rather embrace and reverence GOD'S holy Book, the sacred Bible, which doth represent CHRIST unto us more truly than can any image."

"One thought of GOD, in undiluted splendour,
 Flashed on our feeble gaze,
 Were never borne by mortal sight.
 He knew it, and He gave,
 In mercy tender,
 All that the soul unwittingly doth crave,
 All that it can receive. He robed
 In finite words the sparkles of His thought,
 The starry fire englobed
 In tiny spheres of language, shielding,
 Softening thus
 The living, burning glory. And He brought
 Even to us
 This strange celestial treasure, that no prayer
 Had asked of Him, no ear had heard,
 Nor heart of man conceived. He laid it there,
 Even at our feet, and said it was His Word.
 O mystery of tender grace !
 We find
 GOD's thoughts in human words enshrined,
 GOD's very life and love with ours entwined.
 All wonderingly from page to page we pass,
 Owning the darkening, yet revealing glass ;
 In every line we trace,
 In fair display,
 Prismatic atoms of the glorious Bow
 Projected on the darkest cloud that e'er
 O'er gloomed that world that GOD had made so fair,
 The Rainbow of His Covenant ; each one
 Reflecting perfectly a sevenfold ray,
 Shot from the sun
 Of His exceeding love,
 Strong and serene above,
 Upon a tremulous drop of tearful life below."

Third Sunday in Advent.

CERTAINTY.

IN the midst of the doubt and intellectual confusion of the present day we are sometimes tempted to say, "Oh that I could have certainty respecting the great questions that concern me so nearly!" And perhaps we envy those who saw and heard CHRIST when He was upon earth, and think that if we had lived then our present difficulties would not have vexed and troubled us, and that we should have enjoyed sure and peaceful belief. Yet a few moments' reflection and the reading of the record of those days of the Son of Man will speedily convince us that there is not much to choose between our own position and that of the eye-witnesses of the human life of GOD manifest in the flesh.

There were many strong arguments against the opinion that JESUS of Nazareth was the promised Messiah. We must put aside our traditional conceptions to understand this fully. There were many difficulties that a Jew of those days would feel in acknowledging the claims of CHRIST, and the best-educated men of the day for the most part found those difficulties insuperable. The nation was longing for a redeemer, and was more than willing to accept any one whose claims seemed reasonable. There was "much questioning," we are told, among anxious inquirers. Even at the last, when our LORD was before Pilate, the inquiry often before made, was repeated, "Art Thou the CHRIST?" How much is implied in the midnight visit of Nicodemus to

CHRIST! What heart-searchings there must have been, what study of the prophets, what keen watching and listening to the words and acts of our LORD, what racking of mind, what painful weighing of evidence, what real mental torture must have been endured, before that dignified master in Israel could bring himself to go secretly and humbly to that plain Man and open his heart's grief, and ask the one question that was to him life or death!

And what happened to Nicodemus was doubtless the experience of many besides. Take St. Paul's case. "It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks," said our Lord to him. What did that mean, but that Saul of Tarsus was tortured by conflicting opinions, desire for truth and light, secret drawing towards CHRIST and His disciples on the one hand, and on the other hand traditional belief, the compelling influence of those whom he was bound to respect?

Then a little later this same St. Paul reads the heart of Agrippa like an open book. "I know that thou believest," he said to him; and the king cannot hold back his confession: "Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian." "Almost"—how many, if they had spoken the whole truth, would have said the same then; how many since that day have felt it; how many say it in their hearts to-day!

What, then, does it all come to but to this, that certainty is hard to find in this great inquiry, hard in past times, hard now? What does it come to but that cold mental effort, pure intellectual inquiry, forensic gathering and sifting of evidence, following general opinion, is not enough to ensure Christian faith?

"Search and look," said the acute and learned men of the great council to Nicodemus; "out of Nazareth there ariseth no prophet." Many felt

this and such-like reasons to be final, and that the way to belief in CHRIST was absolutely barred. And to-day the same thing is going on. Once men rested in papal infallibility ; it broke down. Then they set up the infallibility of Scripture ; criticism has upset this human and arbitrary theory of certainty. "The historical evidence of Christianity is imperfect," men say. "The intellectual proofs are faulty ; we do no disbelieve, but we suspend our judgment ; we are compelled to be agnostics."

Well and good. But are men reasonable and consistent who so decide ? If they will have nothing less than certainty, mathematical demonstration, unassailable proof, judicial evidence, what are they going to accept ? When will they feel justified in taking any decided step whatever ?

Of what are we certain ? The evidence of our senses ? What can be more deceptive ? Put your stick into the water, your eyes tell you it is bent ; pull it out, it is straight. Which is the fact ? The sun seems to rise and set ; science tells you that it is the earth that moves. Which will you believe ? You see external objects in certain positions ; the optician tells you that your eyes invert all images. You see green and red ; another sees but one colour, and that neither green nor red. You say he is colour-blind. How do you know that he does not see correctly, and that you are deficient ? So with hearing, touch, taste. We might cite dilemmas enough about each.

But Science is certain ! Is it ? What part of science ? There are several theories as to the sun's heat, its source, its maintenance ; there is no certainty about it. The nebular hypothesis is not a settled belief. There are constantly new theories. Every year something is discovered that upsets older positions. Space and time, we are told, must be infinite, yet either is unthinkable. All physical

science is, after all, merely a probability. Everything that we consider true has originated in hypothesis. "The firmest of all conclusions are dependent on facts, which may have been otherwise in the past, and which may be otherwise in the future, and which may actually at this moment present a totally different appearance to other intelligent beings." Belief in gravitation is an exercise of faith. We accept the conclusions of astronomy, of geology, of evolution, of chemistry, on the testimony of others, but we have not proved them ourselves, and we cannot do so. "So in mathematics, the science most trusted for exactness, it is found that a law sometimes holds good only up to a certain point, and there ceases, from the breaking through of some higher law, a variable quantity depending upon another also variable, and the two changing gradually together." "Geometry has familiarised us with reasoning on space of more dimensions than that in which we live, and of which alone we can conceive; while analysis has necessitated the admission of so-called 'imaginary quantities,' the nature of which the imagination fails to grasp." "It is the characteristic of abstract thought, that, when followed out to its utmost limits, it almost invariably lands us in the region of paradox."

Where, then, have we certainty? To come down to the daily events of ordinary life, do we not constantly act upon imperfect evidence? Have we ever anything more than probability for our guide? So Dr. Newman says, "Probability is the guide of life. Formal logical sequence is not the method by which we are enabled to become certain of what is concrete, but it is the cumulation of probabilities independent of each other, probabilities too fine to avail separately, too subtle and circuitous to be convertible into syllogisms, too numerous and various for such conversion, even were they convertible."

Children and inexperienced people are dogmatic and quite sure; we who have seen so many mistakes are more cautious in our conclusions and assertions. We have learned that uncertainty is as much an attribute of the human mind as mortality is of the human body. We may rebel against the humiliating, degrading consciousness of the limits of our knowledge, but to do so is as unreasonable as to complain that we are absolutely confined to the limits of this small planet, when infinite space is about us. "Whilst we accept gladly those most precious glimmerings of Himself which GOD gives us, we are by reason constrained to acknowledge that the greatest and sublimest part of GOD is unknown and unknowable to us. Just as a dog knows of his master only a very little, and yet that little is of more real importance to him than the large tracts of his master's nature which he cannot know, so that part of our Creator which we can dimly know is in truth a very small fragment, and yet this fragment is to us of inestimable value, and of more present importance than the vast unfathomable recesses of GOD'S inner hidden being."

Demand mathematical certainty for your belief, and you will lapse away into mere animal materialism. Trust to your poor, limited intellect for the foundation of your religion, and you will find both give way and end in idiotic nescience. Question the history of JESUS CHRIST, and you must question the existence of Julius Cæsar, and have, with Whately, "historic doubts" as to Napoleon and his wars. The evidences of Christianity must be sought within, as well as without. The proofs of religion must be looked for in experience, more than in argument. We are like men rowing; we guide our course by what we see behind us. The heart, the conscience, the involuntary aspirations of something within us that is not carnal nor material, the intuitions that no

one has taught us—these must be taken into consideration when we think of GOD, of ourselves, and of our destiny. And so St. Paul says that he “knows ;” and St. John declares that he is “sure ;” and multitudes since them have believed in the unseen, as surely as they have believed in what we call the visible and tangible, and in much else of which we say, “I cannot prove it to you, but to me it is certain.”

JESUS took a little child and set him in the midst of His disciples, and said, “ Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven.” GOD is not found by cold, calculating, intellectual search, but by the instincts that He has implanted in our nature ; and those instincts may be perverted, distorted, killed. “ My soul is athirst for GOD,” said the old-world Psalmist, says the earnest nineteenth century man in the midst of the voices and din of our times, and the reply to both is the Son of Man’s invitation, “ If any man thirst, let him come unto Me and drink.” We take Him at His word. We become His disciples. We follow Him, compelled by His mighty influence ; but as we follow, we fear, we ask questions, we are tempted to draw back, as others do.

But to whom shall we go ? If He will not give us all we desire, where shall we find a Master who will give us what He gives, who promises what He assures us of ? Doubt says, “ I will not, because I am not sure ;” Faith says, “ I will, though I am not sure.” And it is Faith that saves. Even knowledge, we are told, “ shall vanish away ;” for as yet we know but in part ; we see but the reflection of things as in a faulty, distorting mirror. We find life to be a riddle, of which we have not yet received the answer. But when all else fails and lapses away, Faith, Hope, Love, these the three, these abide.



Fourth Sunday in Advent.

ENDING AND BEGINNING.

ALL things of which we have any knowledge have beginning and ending. Some thinkers, both of ancient and modern times, have maintained that matter is eternal. They say they can neither find any traces of its beginning, nor any signs that it will ever come to an end; they can follow some of its wonderful changes, but they suspect that its quantity remains always the same. They cannot prove it, but they consider that, as far as human knowledge and reason can be relied upon, matter may be considered to be eternal, without beginning and without end.

But we Christians cannot accept this unproved and unprovable theory. The Catholic Faith teaches that there are not three nor two eternals, but only one Eternal, the blessed and adorable Triune GOD. Eternity can be the attribute of One only. We see multitudes of things coming to an end; we believe that the law is universal, and that all things come to an end. Nothing continues the same always. The duration may be long or short, but sooner or later there is a change, an end, and then another beginning. Suns and planets have long lives; they pass through many changes, but each period of their existence has its beginning and its end. Great Babylon had world-wide dominion; the city was vast; whole generations of men gave their skill and strength to make it wonderful; its master stood upon its walls, that rose like mountains upon the flat plain of Euphrates; he looked this way and that,

way, and could see no power strong enough to give him alarm. Babylon seemed to defy destruction, and to be immovable, invincible. But Babylon came to an end. Rome was more mighty even than Babylon ; it lasted longer ; it had wider dominion ; men called it the "Eternal City." But the Roman Empire came to an end.

We live our poor little lives, and they are but a series of changes. Childhood comes to an end, then youth. We live a few years here, a few there ; we have friends, habits, surroundings ; and then presently all has come to an end, and our life is going on in quite a different way, and there will come by-and-by another change, another end ; men call it death.

We are drawing near to the year's end ; and then there will be a new year, a beginning. We have gone all through the year's series of festival and fast, of commemoration and instruction ; and now we have begun again. A pastor works in a parish for a certain number of years ; then he is removed ; but the Church and the Church's work go on. There is an end ; but there is at once a new beginning. So it is with all things. There is always a beginning or an ending in our affairs ; birth and death ; greeting and parting ; somebody or something new, and so somebody or something passing away. So be it, for weal or woe, for so it must be.

But let us try and get some helpful thoughts from all this, some spiritual instruction, something encouraging from that which at first sight seems to be rather depressing. Let us, then, take it for certain that our spiritual life and health are made up of a series of beginnings and endings. If we were other and higher beings than we are, this might not be so. It certainly is not the highest and noblest form of spiritual life that we can imagine. How much better we might have been than we are ! If we had preserved our baptismal purity unsullied ; if we had-

been able to use all the grace of Confirmation ; if every Communion had been a really good one, how far should we have advanced by this time towards sanctity and perfection ! But we know how very different it has been with us. We have made good beginnings, and then, alas ! all has come to an end in some fall ; and we seem to have lost all we had gained. When we were confirmed we made good resolutions ; at Lent, on our birthday, after some illness, during a Mission—nay, at every Communion. Yes, day by day, as we have knelt at our bedside and examined ourselves as to what we have done in the day, we have made new beginnings ; and then, when we find that we have failed and broken down again and again, we begin to get out of heart, and to think that it is of no use, and that GOD will have lost patience with us, and that we may as well give up trying, for we never can be good.

Now, we must not think so. It is a temptation. Some evil one whispers it, that he may keep us from repentance and salvation ; that he may make us like himself. There is a good deal of pride at the bottom of such thoughts. We were so sure of our good intentions ; we had such a high opinion of our ability to do what we wished ; we were quite certain that nothing would be able to overthrow us. And when we are down again, just in the old way, our wounded pride rankles, and we get angry with everybody and everything. We are very like ill-conditioned little children who, when they fall and hurt themselves, lie screaming, or begin to beat something that tripped them up and hurt them. And so St. Francis of Sales, who, beside being a great saint, had a very bright and pleasant common-sense way of looking at things, when some one came to him with a long dismal tale of failure and falls, of broken resolution, and disappointed expectation of what he was going to do and to be, and asked what was the

remedy for all this, expecting to hear a learned and abstruse system of conduct explained at length, Francis looked at him quietly, and with a half-suppressed smile, and said, "Well, there is only one thing to be done; you must just do what a little child does when it tumbles; get up, and try again." Perhaps Francis, being a great saint, had learned the meaning and force of our LORD'S words more thoroughly than most people; and we know that our LORD said that the best way to enter the kingdom of heaven was to become as a little child; and the little child that is well disciplined and trained picks itself up after a fall, and runs on again. This is just what we must do. There has come, perhaps, a disastrous end; we must just make a new beginning.

There is, in fact, no choice about the matter. If we are not going to give up our Christian profession and our hopes, what else can we do? If the farmer has had a bad harvest, he sows another crop, and hopes for better things. When the disciples had been toiling all night, and had taken nothing, our LORD would only help them on condition that they let down the net once more. The blessed who are waiting safely for their resurrection are what they are because they were never tired of making new beginnings. Souls are not lost because of their falls and failures, but because they will not begin again. Peter fell; but he kept near his LORD, and presently he caught His eye, and went out and wept bitterly, very much ashamed of himself, very penitent, very humble, quite ready to make a new beginning. And he was pardoned and restored. Judas fell; but he was only mortified and angry. Despair followed, and he was lost. David, the Publican, the Prodigal, Magdalen, all these fell badly, miserably, but they repented; that is, they made a new beginning, and GOD, in His mercy, forgave the sin, and blessed and helped them, when they tried to do better.

Now, is there not great comfort for us, such as we are, in all this ? Every one gets out of heart sometimes ; every one is disposed to be weary in well-doing sometimes. There is no doctrine of the Gospel more consoling, more indispensable, than this, that if we have done wrong or failed we may make a new beginning. It is a peculiarity of CHRIST'S revelation ; it is the introduction of a new and unknown system into the world's affairs. Nature is inexorable ; it makes no allowance for mistakes. What is done brings its consequences inevitably. There is no place for repentance, no opportunity for making a new beginning. And a great part of human affairs follows the same rule. Laws are made, and if they are transgressed, there comes the judge, and his sentence. The way of the world is to be hard upon a man when he is down. " You have made your bed, and now you must lie upon it." There are proverbs in all languages that tell people that sort of thing.

But JESUS CHRIST, Himself Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, is greater than man, greater than nature. He is not tied and bound by narrow and unrelaxing laws. His commandment is exceeding broad. He introduces the human element of pity. He works not like a machine, always in one monotonous and unalterable routine, the same for all ; but there is the Father's compassion, the weighing of circumstances, the consideration of each case on its own merits, the skilful and equitable adjustment of the lot of each reasonable creature, the remembering that we are but dust, the Creator's knowledge of His creature's weakness and infirmities, the loving Father's yearning over His child, ready to forgive, to make excuses, to receive the weeping penitent, the broken-hearted prodigal, to meet them half-way and more, to give them another trial, to encourage them to begin again.

So that, when we look back at our life, and are

ashamed to see how many beginnings we have made, and are almost inclined to despair, and never to make another beginning, we must remember that these beginnings are not lost and wasted efforts. Where should we have been now if we had not made them? They are foundations for yet new beginnings. The trees at this season have shed all their beautiful leaves, and they are lying thick upon the ground. It seems all waste; but it is not really so. The leaves will keep the roots warm; they will decay, and manure and strengthen their parent tree, and help it to produce a larger crop of leaves next spring. So our new beginnings arise from those old beginnings, that seemed to result in nothing but disappointing endings. We all know Bruce's story of the spider and its shattered web, and how its patient beginning all its spoiled work again gave the despairing traveller heart and hope and energy. Look at any of our old towns; dig down and you will find ruins, and ruins under them. The place has been sacked and burned and destroyed over and over again since the Romans first made their camp there; but men have set to work and built again, and turned old ruins into foundations of new structures. Sometimes, too, our beginnings were in the wrong direction, or were faulty in principle, and so it is well that they soon came to an end, for they could not have resulted in any good issue; just as a badly set limb is sometimes actually broken again by a clever surgeon, that he may make it as good as it was originally.

The wise Christian man, then, avails himself of every opportunity to make a new beginning. Advent, Lent, changes, whether personal or in his surroundings, yearly, daily, unexpected changes, all may be made occasions of new beginnings. There are always changes; all things come to an end; they are always coming to an end; so there must be

constantly new beginnings, if there is life, if there is to be progress, if we are to avoid stagnation, decay, death, destruction. Our Master's command is very broad; it touches every one, every age, every circumstance in each man's life and experience; everything is provided for, everything is covered by it; it is never taken by surprise. The broad rule of Christian life is to make a new beginning, as soon as ever an end comes. Troubles seem often as if they were exceptions; they look as if they were never coming to an end; but they do end at last, sometimes in other troubles, sometimes only at death. Pleasures come to an end; privileges, friendships, spiritual opportunities, particular kinds of work or employment. Some things last a longer, some a shorter time; but none are without an end. We are always saying, "Well, that's done; there's an end of that." Sometimes we are glad, sometimes sorry; but the next thought must be, "What have I to do now? What have I to begin?"

As He hung upon the Cross, the Saviour of the world contemplated the work He had come into the world to do, and which He so earnestly desired to accomplish, and He cried with restful content, "It is finished." But then He began again a new work, for "He ever liveth, a Priest, to make intercession for us." There is no idleness in anything that GOD has made, nor in any creature that does His will. There will be some day an end of this life for each of us, as we see day by day the end coming to those side by side with us; and some people talk as if we were going to rest for ever after that. Well, I hope we shall rest from pain and sorrow and separation and sin; but we shall surely find a new beginning awaiting us beyond the grave, an active, progressive, busy life, with GOD'S commandment reaching over and around us still; and in fulfilling of that commandment our duty and our joy.

First Sunday after Christmas.

MICHAEL'S ANSWER TO SATAN.

CHRISTMAS ever brings to our minds the thought of the holy angels. When we have adored the Incarnate GOD, and can take our thoughts off from wondering at His humiliation and praising His love, we find ourselves face to face with the holy angels. When GOD became an inhabitant of the earth, then a door was opened in heaven, and the songs that never cease before the throne of the Eternal were heard for once here below. For once men's eyes were opened and the heavenly host was revealed, the glorious, beautiful, sinless elder sons of GOD, worshipping, rejoicing in the love of GOD and in the salvation of men. They will teach us how to keep Christmastide; they will teach us how to worship, how to demean ourselves in the presence of the miracle of love which was wrought in the Incarnation.

See how selfless was their joy. They mention only GOD and men. They marvel at the condescension of GOD; they rejoice in the salvation of men. Their love to GOD was already all-absorbing, but a new phase of it created in them new expressions, new songs. Man's salvation did not alter their condition of perfect happiness, but their sympathy was roused at the thought of man's redemption, and their joy found its vent in hymns of gladness.

But there is a deeper lesson than all this in the

angels' attitude with respect to the Incarnation. The angels were GOD'S creation, long before man existed. They had their probation, as we have ours, and some of their number fell. It is believed by wise and holy men that this probation was in some way connected with man, and his redemption by the Incarnate Son of GOD. Michael the archangel was the leader of the hosts of the faithful and obedient angels, and perhaps we have in those words of his, recorded by St. Jude, "The LORD rebuke thee," something more than a mere reply to the Evil One, when he disputed about the body of Moses.

There seems to be in these words a declaration of faith, a policy, if we may so call it, that ruled and guided the angels that sinned not all through the long ages of the past, and which must still live in their souls, and govern their thoughts and conduct. May we not believe that to the minds of the angels the existence of evil was a difficulty and a stumbling-block, as it is to us; that they desired to look into this and other mysteries of GOD, and yet were not permitted to see and understand; and may we not imagine that when the temptation came to impatience, or rebellion, or doubt of GOD'S power or goodness or love, the reply to the tempter would be but this, "The LORD rebuke thee"?

Long after, when Abraham, the typical faithful man, was tried sorely, he in like manner waited patiently upon GOD in darkness and bitter pain; so that his name ever after became the symbol of living, mighty faith, and a proverb arose from the memories of Moriah, "In the mount of the LORD it shall be seen." It meant this—wait on patiently till GOD'S time comes, and all will be well; bear bravely till the end, and the end will bring relief and joy; go on all the long way to the land that GOD points out; go up the mountain to the very top,

there, and not till you are there, will you see the meaning of GOD'S strange command, of GOD'S hard task.

So it seems as if Michael's words were justified to-day—"The LORD rebuke thee." Michael knew not why evil should exist, why it should triumph, why man should fall beneath its sway; but he trusted GOD, who knew better than he, and he left the controversy in His hands. And now, at Christmastide, the mystery begins to be made clear. GOD has stooped from heaven to become Man. He has taken the matter into His own hands. He has ranged Himself, as a Man, on man's side, against the Evil One, and will give him his answer in tremendous blows upon his kingdom and power.

"The one rough word," with which the son of Sirach says GOD could crush out evil, was not spoken, but, instead, the Word of GOD was made flesh, and tabernacled among us. We see Him to-day, a silent Word; speechless, yet not by weakness, but by love; speechless, yet fulfilling the will of GOD; speechless, yet the Saviour of men.

But even then the magnificent trust of Michael and the holy angels did not end. It looked unlike a revelation of power and victory, when they saw their GOD humbled beyond all understanding, hidden in the poor little helpless body of a new-born babe. But they rested their whole weight upon GOD, and waited. Then came the flight into Egypt; weakness still, it seemed. There were danger and fear, but no signs of conquest; nothing clear yet. Then the obscure life at Nazareth, the carpenter's Son; still no trumpet-call to bid them set on and vindicate GOD and truth and right. Then the three years' ministry; miracles indeed, but even wicked men were not vanquished; and where was the conquest of evil spirits, and of the vast empire of evil, throughout the works of GOD? If any evil one whispered

this in Michael's ear, the reply was still but this—“The LORD rebuke thee.”

Then came the awful events of Calvary; awful indeed to the angels who knew Who it was that hung upon the Cross; awful beyond all that we can conceive to them, when they heard that cry, “My GOD, My GOD, why hast Thou forsaken Me?” But still they endured, and waited, and the Resurrection must have been to them even more than it was to the apostles.

We might go further yet. The history of the Church; the state of the world all along the Christian era down to this very day; the terrible sight of souls rebelling against GOD, and working out their own sure ruin, in spite of Bethlehem and Calvary; the agonising sight of the misery of multitudes through man's abuse of his power as GOD'S steward in the government of the world, of his misuse of his delegated authority, of his waste of precious gifts, of his perversion of mighty agencies. Still, surely the tempter might sneer and boast, and try to overthrow the angels' steadfastness by pointing out all these signs of seeming failure; and still surely, day by day, whenever the doubt was suggested, perhaps this very day, the old reply has been made by angelic lips—“The LORD rebuke thee.” Nothing but this; no argument, no reviling, no wavering of faith; but only this—“The LORD rebuke thee.”

Let the angels, then, teach us to-day. Let Michael give an answer for us to those who would think Gabriel's mission has failed, and who would throw a dark shade over the brightness of our Christmas season. They point out to us the growing power of evil. They say that now the victory will come, and that the name of GOD shall soon be blotted out, even from the memories of the people. They tell us that the Church is doomed, that Christianity is played out, that we have been deceived and deluded,

and that men are wiser now. Shall we not say too, to-day, standing by the Manger, “‘The LORD rebuke thee.’ I cannot understand all this; I cannot answer your arguments; but I believe in GOD; I rest on GOD; I love GOD, and I leave it all in His hands”?

Or does the tempter spoil our Christmastide by stirring up within us discontent at our lot, impatience under our troubles, weariness under the monotony of a dreary life? Does he tempt us to despair because of our want of progress in the spiritual life and victory over faults? Does he tell us that it is of no use to try to do right, or to resist those who would lead us downwards? Then let us answer him, as Michael answered him, “‘The LORD rebuke thee.’ Where I cannot see, I can still believe. Where my faith totters, my love holds fast. I kneel to-day in the stable at Bethlehem; my GOD has done all that for me; He will do more yet; more than I can ask or think; all that I need. I can find no master, no lord, better than He. I will cling to Him in spite of all in life, and commend my soul to Him when I come to die.”

Second Sunday after Christmas.

"I WOULD NOT LIVE ALWAY."

OF late years books have been written, and much newspaper and other correspondence has taken place, on the question whether life is worth living. The inquiry is by no means a new one. The Greek philosophers held discussions on the same matter ; Gautema Buddha in India found himself involved in this great controversy ; and if fanaticism and brutality had not destroyed the libraries of the old world, we should doubtless have been reading to-day learned treatises on human life and its characteristics, written when that mummy lately unwound in London was a living man, some four or five thousand years ago.

The Book of Job is believed to represent men's thoughts at a period earlier than that which any other book of the Bible records, and we find in it discussions respecting this life, its merits and its disadvantages, and the net result is summed up in the conclusion, " I would not live alway." Job does not mean that he has no belief in and desire for immortality, for that we find him asserting and rejoicing in elsewhere. But he says that, from his knowledge and experience of human life as it is, best and worst, he would not wish it to be indefinitely prolonged, that he would not wish to "live alway" here in this world, either because life is not satisfactory, or because he has a sure faith in a life to come, which will be better and more satisfying.

Let us then, on this, the first Sunday of a New Year, try and take a calm retrospective and prospective view of human life, as it is now, and see whether we too come to the same conclusion as did wise and holy Job in his far-off age, and say, "I would not live alway."

There have been pessimists in all ages of the world, men and women, mostly poor creatures, selfish, unloving, unloved, useless, godless people, who have taken a dark and despairing view of life. Such was Schopenhauer, called by his admirers "the king of modern thought." This man declared that existence was an unmitigated evil, and that the world was the worst possible world. He professed that his constant aim was to acquire a clear view of the utter despicability of mankind. With all this, he was himself utterly selfish, immoral, and mean. His mother could not live with him, because of his persistent ill-temper and brutality. One of his greatest admirers declared that he was distinguished by boisterous arrogance, and vanity in the worst sense of the word; that neglect exasperated him; that he was ever suspicious and irritable. He was always in a state of morbid fear of death, misfortune, and illness. He was an atheist. He despised women. He ridiculed the idea of patriotism, and of pity for the poor and unfortunate. He was grossly sensual, and indulged freely in the coarsest animal pleasures.

We may surely put aside the verdict of such men. With all their talents, they are scarcely human. There seems to be something diabolical in their nature. These apostles of the gospel of hate, then, may be disregarded by those who desire to be guided by the gospel of the love of GOD and of goodwill towards men. Human nature is not altogether bad. Human life is not all misery, or a mistake. The primeval curse does not always work.

The sweet atmosphere of the lost Paradise is still sometimes wafted through its closed and guarded gates. Every one of us has spent many happy hours. We have loved and been loved. We have to-day many blessings, many joys. And yet we shall probably be quite ready to endorse what Job says elsewhere, that "man is born to trouble, as the sparks fly upward."

Take the very first stage of human existence. The new-born babe comes into the world weeping in pain. Life begins with tears and suffering. Who has not seen some poor little infant's face distorted with convulsions; the fragile frame racked with agony, fighting for breath? That period of life is generally, indeed, placid and peaceful, but it is at best but a very low and imperfect kind of existence. None of us would say of it, otherwise than that thus at least, "I would not live alway."

Then comes Childhood. Poets and some others speak of this stage of life as if it were a period of careless gaiety and unmixed joyousness. It is said—

"Ah! happy years!
Who would not be a child once more?"

People look enviously upon the rude health, the buoyant spirits, the freedom from the worries, anxieties, and responsibilities that surround and oppress them, and unreasonably persuade themselves that child-life is all pleasure. But is it so really? What mean, then, those frequent tears? What shall we say of the irksome duty of obedience, the struggle of the untrained nature against unintelligible restraints and regulations, the constant crossings of the will and the inclination, the gradual and painful bending and moulding of the wild and free spirit into the routine of custom and conventionalities?

Think of the slow acquisition of learning. What hard work it is, so unnatural, so distasteful, so tedious, so vexatious, so hopelessly long! Not that there is not all this time much real pleasure and enjoyment. But the question is, should we like to "live always" thus; should we be content to be always in a state of childhood, with its mental littleness, its pains, and its joys? Should we, grown-up men and women, with our knowledge of a higher life, be willing, if it might be, to "live always" as children?

Next comes Youth. The troubles of childhood are now gone, but all relish for its pleasures has also gone. We cannot emerge from one condition and enter upon another, and carry its share of happiness with us. We have always to strike a balance between the good and the evil of our present circumstances. "Man never continueth in one stay." The greatest obstacle to present enjoyment is the restless, eager desire for something that is not ours. Youth is indeed a golden time, but much of its solid worth is flung away to clutch a shadowy boon that hope's flattering tale promises.

So Youth passes; and perhaps the much-desired advantages are gained, independence, marriage, position, honour. But what now? What means the anxious expression on the faces of men and women? What do they say of themselves and their life? Are they quite satisfied? Would they like to "live always" just as they are? Is there not ever just something wanting, this to be removed, that to be obtained, that feared possibility that lowers, that bitterness that each heart knows?

Lastly, there comes Old Age. Nature clings to life, but this is not so much from love of life as from fear of death. So old-world flattery addressed the favourites of fortune with the formula, "Live for ever." But, in sober earnest, who would "live

alway" with all the penalties of old age upon them ? Greek fable imagined one who had asked and obtained from the gods immortality, but had failed to ask and obtain perpetual youth, and so he lived on in misery ; and Tennyson well depicts him moaning thus :—

"The strong Hours indignant worked their wills,
And beat me down and marred and wasted me,
And though they could not end me, left me maimed,
To dwell in presence of immortal youth ;
Immortal age beside immortal youth ;
And all I was, in ashes !"

Thus, then, we have briefly sketched man's life in its successive ages, and we cannot find one of which we can heartily say, "In this I would 'live alway.'" If indeed a man could always enjoy good health, perpetual youth, freedom from poverty and trouble, he might be content to live always in this world. But who can expect this ? Who has ever had such an experience ? It never has been ; it never can be. We must take the world as it is, and human life as many thousand years prove that it must always be, and with life as it is no one is really satisfied.

The animals live and rest in the present. Man has another and a higher instinct which the animal does not possess, which blindly craves for something never yet attained. Many, alas ! are little better than dumb, unprogressive animals ; they try to make this world their home, and to find satisfaction in it ; and they become ill-tempered, restless, savage, beast-like, because they fail.

But the spiritual man is full of aspirations. The more his soul is educated and cultured, the more insatiable wants does he develop. The charms of nature cannot be fully grasped ; they are not infinite, but in our most delicious moments we feel all-unable to rise to the complete enjoyment of what

we see and hear, sunsets, mountains, a starry night, music, the silent eloquence of a summer's day, a beautiful face, a heart-to-heart talk with a man whom we love and honour. And then there are the boundless fields of knowledge and discovery; the secret powers of the universe, its history; our own nature and its undeveloped endowments; the wonders of life beyond this little world. Who that has ventured even ankle-deep into the margin of the limitless, unfathomable ocean of thought and knowledge would say of this life, "I would live alway"?

Nor is this all. There are yet more and more noble longings which remain unsatisfied, inconsolable here; the desire for sinlessness; the passionate yearning for soul-purity; the loathing of our own infirmities, our own despicable failures; a vague, glorious ideal self that we feel is struggling for birth within us, kept down by the flesh, that cannot expand into its full strength here in the midst of all this finite and feeble environment; the groping in the surrounding darkness towards the far-off, dimly discerned realm of light; the unquenchable belief in truth in the midst of delusions and the falseness that crushes us and sometimes almost stifles us into despair and disbelief; the mysterious capacities for love that have never yet found their proper sphere; the profound conviction that there are those whom we could love without reserve, better than ourselves, whom we could honour and reverence, for whom we could live and sacrifice all we have and are, and in that sacrifice find hitherto unimagined joys. In a word, "My soul is athirst for GOD;" and therefore of this life I must say, "I would not live alway."

First Sunday after Epiphany.

IDEALS.

WE might almost define man as a creature that conceives ideals. The animals have no ideals, no aspirations, no regrets, no disappointments. They remain the same always, and are content, and at peace. But human beings, as soon as they develop consciousness, begin to be restless with ardent desires after something that their imagination tells them is desirable.

The little child can hardly be said to have an ideal, for its wants and wishes are so rapidly formed and forgotten, that it has much more in common with the lower animals than with the reasonable and reflecting man. But as the child's intellect develops, it very soon conceives ideals, and is most eager and impetuous in trying to realise them. Its ideals are neither lofty nor permanent, but they give rise to action and passion; and the sad truth is soon discovered that human ideals are not usually attained. Disappointment and tears follow, but some new thought speedily dissipates them, and another object of desire engages the attention.

Youth is the time of all others for the conceptions of ideals. All life, all the world, all possibilities, seem before the young mind. The blood runs hot and vigorously; the imagination is active; hope leads on joyously and confidently; the present is impatiently endured; the future is clothed with every rainbow tint; matter-of-fact counsels and grave fore-

bodings are thrust aside as utterly unworthy of attention.

Experience, and nothing but experience, teaches how mistaken most of these youthful ideals are. Generation after generation has the same experience, yet they are few indeed who learn wisdom by any other experience than their own, or who purchase prudence in any cheaper market than that of disappointment and suffering.

Yet no thoughtful man would rob the young of their ideals. The young man or woman who has no ideal is not worth much; for the power of originating ideals is, as we have said, a characteristic that distinguishes man from the lower animals, and it abides with man all his life through. Without an ideal, man stands still or retrogrades. The savage man has his ideal, such as it is; and every stage of civilisation, every rank and condition of life, has its ideals.

One method of discovering generally what is the ideal of a people, is to find out what is their ideal heaven. The North American native hoped for happy hunting-grounds, freedom from hunger, and safe repose after congenial exertion. The hardy warriors of ancient Europe looked forward to successful fighting, good eating, and hard drinking. All the world over burial customs show that uncivilised races desired the occupations and pleasures of this life, without its pains and sorrows. We may judge, perhaps, truly of Mahomet and his religious system, by seeing that, in spite of what some panegyrists claim for him, his ideal was a mere sensual Paradise, from which half the human race, even if all accepted his teaching, would be excluded.

But keeping to our own country and our own times, let us think for a moment how important to each one of us is our own ideal. Take, for example, the case of marriage. Marriages are contracted for

many reasons, but the ordinary marriage of affection is really founded upon an ideal. The man conceives in his mind the thought of an ideal woman, the one woman who can make him happy. Presently he thinks he discovers this ideal woman. Probably there are some features of his ideal in her, and passion, imagination, and hope persuade him that they are all there; and many an unhappy marriage has for its secret of failure the discovery that the ideal was so largely imagination, and so little reality. The same may be said of many women's disappointments with their husbands. Ideal perfections do not exist, either in men or women, and those who flatter themselves that they have met with an instance and appropriated it to themselves have usually a very sad awakening from their dream.

But even if the search for the ideal is disappointed in one direction, it is quite certain to be directed in some other. Every one at this moment has an ideal in their inmost heart. The mother broods over an ideal life for her child. The middle-aged man, sobered indeed by many a hope unrealised, but still unconverted from the human innate passion, dwells in quiet moments upon his ideal future, his ideal home, his ideal attainment. And no sooner is the search for and pursuit of an ideal disappointed in one direction than it is commenced in another direction. Even the old have their ideals. The worst of them, childish ideals revived, petty, selfish, self-indulgent thoughts and desires; the best of them, ideals in which those dear to them figure rather than they themselves, and hopes that reach on into another life, the fruit of a mature wisdom, the outcome of a life's experience that has sobered, not soured, and extended the horizon of hope, instead of perverting it into despair.

So far we have considered present and individual ideals; but there is another class that relates to

man's wider relations. Civilised man has always had ideals as regards states and governments, kingdoms and communities. Plato long ago committed to writing the plan of his ideal Republic. Sir Thomas More wrote his under the title of "Utopia." Others have executed similar works. Men have tried many forms of government, and have elaborated various schemes of laws, but as yet the perfect system has not been discovered that will command the respect and obedience of all. We in our own day have seen kings and republics, emperors and constitutions, made and overthrown ; and still the work is going on, and we seem as far off an ideal system as ever. And now there is rising up in Europe a deep underground, widespread ideal, vague, unformed ; only, its promoters tell us that it will and must come, and that the seed-bed of its growth will be the ruin-heap under which lie buried all present governments, all civilisation, all industry, art, science, all the fruits of man's labour and thought these many weary centuries. An awful prospect indeed !—an ideal that seems to be nothing else than the fruit of a madman's morbid brain, the terrible offspring of despair and degradation, of hereditary crime, that has turned men into savage beasts that can do nothing but hurt and destroy !

But now, as regards the Church, how much may be explained, how much may be patiently endured, if we go on to the natural conclusion from all this, that an ideal Church does not exist, has never existed, and will never exist upon the earth ! The book of the Acts of the Apostles, the Epistles, and the Apocalypse show plainly enough that there was no perfect Church in the first age. History tells the same story on every page. Some sigh after the primitive Church ; some long after the mediæval Church. They create an ideal Church, and imagine that it has existed. It is a mistake.

Others originate sects, which are to be free from the evils they lament in the Church ; but other and greater evils spontaneously spring up in the virgin soil, and the ideal Church is still as unknown as the ideal state, or the ideal man or woman.

There is but one more ideal that we can notice—our ideal self; not our surroundings, of which we have spoken, home or occupations or companions or other accidents external to ourselves, but our inner spiritual selves. Who has not an ideal self ? Who has not dreamed of what he might be, could be, if, and if—if certain conditions could be obtained. One man's ideal is a poet, another a statesman, another a general, another a saint, another a sage, another a Solomon in his sensual luxury. We may learn a great deal about our real self, if we will gravely analyse this ideal self. Alas ! it is very often nothing but the joint creation of pride and selfishness.

But not always. This ideal self may be the true spiritual man, cramped and prisoned in the natural man, as the butterfly is folded up in the chrysalis. Have not all men and women who have been great and good and useful first conceived their ideal self, and then by force of will more or less realised it ? Tell me what is your ideal self, and I will tell you what you are. What is your ideal self ? Is it something higher, purer, nobler, more spiritual, more loving, more self-sacrificing, than your poor real everyday self ? Do you not merely day-dream about it, but strive to attain it ; not weakly lamenting your inferiority to it, as the woman, no longer young, vexes herself as she looks at her own portrait in the heyday of her charms, but as the youth who reads of noble deeds, and says, "I too will do the like" ? Do you feel within an unquenchable desire to rise, like the poor caged eagle that is ever spreading its wings for flight up to the clear blue ?

Rejoice, then, and hope. In all the wide world of

GOD'S creation there has never yet been found an instinct that has not its proper fulfilment. As the young bird, taught by GOD alone, flies; as the ant works in community; as the insect provides for its coming transformations, so the soul of man yearns and prepares for its coming development, its higher unfettered life, taught by GOD alone, led on by faith, not by experience. CHRIST Himself blesses these aspirations. What He came into the world to teach itself gave rise to these supernatural longings, to these superhuman ideals.

What is the source of noble ideals? Is it not the stirring within us of faculties that cannot now and here find their proper field of exercise? Is it not the straining for the birth of powers that this world of sense and change, these bodies of matter, cannot sustain, cannot gratify? Was not man made in the image of GOD? Has not the Pattern-Man been seen in the world? He came, indeed, as a poor ignorant peasant, but in Him were all the possibilities of human perfection. The perfect king, the perfect magistrate, the perfect husband and father, were there in His perfect human nature. As you may clothe the man with the insignia of any office, so, having the perfect man, all human vocations may be assumed. All fulness dwelt in the CHRIST, all goodness, all the special qualities that special callings demand. By CHRIST all good kings exercised their kingcraft; from Him, as from an inexhaustible fountain, all wisdom has flowed, that has made men great in their several destinies, physicians, discoverers, scientists, saints. He hid His powers, but they have been revealed in His servants; in one, one gift; in another, another. All noble human characteristics come from the Man CHRIST JESUS. All the good that we are conscious of in ourselves is from Him, after His likeness. And He in us, by His Spirit, can make this grow and develop, till our ideal self is realised.

Wait, then, and hope, O aspiring soul of man ! Hold fast that shadowy ideal that seems so thin and intangible, and yet is so real to you, so inseparable from your inmost life. Material things are not so firm and certain, are not so abiding and true, as the things unseen and spiritual. This world, and the things in it, and we ourselves, are but the shadows of the great realities in the unseen universe. For this we look ; in this we believe ; the ideal city, the city that hath foundations whose Builder and Maker is GOD ; the ideal State, the Kingdom established in righteousness ; the ideal Church, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing ; the ideal self, ourselves made after the image of CHRIST, the perfect Man, satisfied with His likeness.



Second Sunday after Epiphany.

ALWAYS SOMETHING WANTING.

THE Gospel story tells us to-day that in the midst of the supper at the marriage at Cana "they wanted wine." So the wedding festival was spoiled, and the givers of the feast were shamed, and a shadow fell upon the brightness of their wedding-day for the bride and bridegroom. Perhaps they were poor, and this entertainment was a little beyond their means, "whose hoard was little, but whose heart was great;" perhaps more guests had come than were expected, for on such days open house is kept, and warm and generous hearts are lavish with invitations. But, come as it might, here was an unlooked-for disappointment, an annoyance, where all should have been pleasure and gladness.

Probably it was the custom then, as it is now, to flatter and exaggerate a good deal on wedding-days; to speak only of the bright side of life; to ignore all unpleasant possibilities; to "make believe," as children do in their play; and to assume that trouble and sorrow and disappointment do not exist, or that they will not affect the persons now beginning life together. But there, at Cana, as so often still, there broke in this discord in the marriage melody, an unwelcome matter-of-fact reminder that human life is, after all, not unmixed happiness, let people do and say what they may. Novels pour out in an endless stream from the press in which he and she are led through a variety of experiences,

but the end comes alike in all, "And so they were married, and lived happily together ever after." People never seem to tire of reading this sort of thing. Our lending libraries are full of such books, and they are read by hundreds, while other books are read but by tens. Every one knows that the picture is not true to life; yet every one seems to conspire to keep up the delusion. Every one knows that there are unhappy marriages. Courts of law and common talk prove it by stubborn, disagreeable facts. Every one knows that for two persons to live intimately together, all their lives, having to bear with each other's faults and infirmities, to love and honour one another under all circumstances, to be fast-loving, inalienable friends from youth to age, is a very different thing from the novel ideal and wedding-day talk. None know this better than those who have most wisely and most happily married. Ten, or twenty, or thirty years of married life, they find, has not weakened the old love. There it is to-day, as it was on the wedding-day, and before; and there is added to it now respect, and confidence, and gratitude, which the experience of years has caused to grow up. The face may have lost its youthful charms; the hair may have thinned and turned grey; but new beauties have been discovered; another, and a deeper admiration has arisen. Those two hearts are growing more dear, more necessary to one another, as life goes on. This is what happens in every true marriage.

But for all that, every one knows that human life, under all circumstances, is a chequered scene, neither all pleasure nor all trouble; for its troubles are rendered bearable by counteracting comforts, and there are none of its joys without some alloy. Children do not understand this. Their little troubles utterly overwhelm them, while they last, which, happily, is not long; and their hopes are so hot and

eager, that all idea of disappointment or drawback is thrust away with resistless impatience. But the strange thing is, that these childish ideas linger on into what ought to be mature life. It is said that "men are but children of a larger growth;" and are we not very often astonished to see the childishness of men and women? Old people are said to come to a "second childhood;" and most truly; for many of the faults of childhood reappear with the weakness and infirmities of old age—selfishness, curiosity, greediness, impatience, ill-temper, and such like. But are not childish faults apparent in other people all through life; specially this hope of unmixed good? No sooner is one hope disappointed than another is taken up. No wisdom is learned by experience. Hope's flattering tale is told over and over again, and always believed. Men and women rest their whole weight upon one reed after another, that breaks under their hand; and yet they never seem to learn that there is nothing in this world of ours that is made to be thus leaned upon. There is a saying, "You cannot put old heads on young shoulders;" but very often we seem to see young heads on old shoulders; childish inexperience and unwisdom in those who ought long ago to have put away such childish things. People speak of their troubles as if they were quite exceptional, and demand sympathy and pity, as if some strange thing had happened to them; whereas a little thought would tell them that there is nothing new in the matter, but only that which is common to man, an oft-told tale. Sickness, the loss of friends and dearer ones, disappointments, misfortunes, these always come unexpected to some people. They are never prepared for them; and so they cannot bear them with any sort of patience or resignation. They live year after year in the world, yet never learn the plain, broad, unvarying features of human life; they are always being taken by sur-

prise. And so some persons become soured and cynical, and say that life is not worth having, and exaggerate the evils of the world, as others magnify its good things. But this too is very like an ill-tempered, sulky child, who will not listen to kind friends and loving companions, but mopes apart, because something has gone wrong and displeased him.

We might have expected that our LORD, when He came into the world as one of us, would have set all this right. If He came to take away the curse, and to redeem us from the effects of the Fall, we might have thought that He would at the same time heal all the world's sores, and make all bright and sound again. But this was not His will. His "hour had not yet come." He came into the world, and instead of doing away with the ills of human life, He simply bore them alongside of us. He felt pain, and poverty, and ignorance, and obscurity. He was hungry, and thirsty, and weary. He was disappointed with friends. He fell into misfortunes. He was at this wedding, for example, when the wine ran short. He was in the ship when the sudden storm came on. He stood and wept by the grave-side of one who was very dear to Him.

But it will be said, He provided wine by miracle; He assuaged the storm; He raised Lazarus to life. True enough; He manifested thus His Divine power; He vindicated His mission; He proclaimed Himself to be GOD. But how many died whom He did not raise; how many storms were there that raged and destroyed, and He never spake the word, "Peace, be still;" how many sick were not healed; how many sore, sad hearts had to bear their trouble to the end, though He was near, and knew all, and could have stopped the evil with a word, and yet did not! He, and no one else, had the power to do away with life's ills, and, except in a few cases, and for a special purpose, He never interfered, but let all go

on, while He lived in the midst of them, just as He had done before and has done ever since.

The fact is, our LORD did not come to be the old world's hoped-for Saviour, to restore the golden age, and give man all he desires here upon earth. He did not come to be the Jewish Messiah, to conquer all nations with the sword, and set up a world-wide dominion of justice and peace. No; He came to be one of us; one with us in our joys and sorrows; to show us how to use these wisely, and to bear those patiently. He came to tell us the certainty of that which man always hoped for, another life, a better world, a reward for well-doing, a sphere in which to exercise the qualities gained, the character formed here, in this rough schoolroom. He came here but as a stranger and sojourner, like ourselves. His Home and ours is in our Father's House above. If His passing touch, His light word, when He pleased to use them, did such mighty things, and healed all the ills of life, what would He have us learn by this, but that in the land where He is King and LORD these sweet, mighty influences are ever coming forth from Him, and sheltering His beloved from all harm, and giving them all good things?

Here there is always some flaw in the best. Here nothing is perfect. The wedding-feast is marred by an unlooked-for want. At the marriage-feast of the Lamb there will be no wants; for the guests of GOD will in Him possess all things, and they "hunger no more, neither thirst any more."

Third Sunday after Epiphany.

THE END OF DESTRUCTIONS.

WE speak commonly of "The Psalms of David." Many of the Psalms were doubtless written by him, but others were probably by much earlier authors; and besides that, that which they and David himself penned was almost certainly more or less the reproduction of the words of men of still farther-off ages. The Psalms, then, hand down to us the thoughts, aspirations, and sorrows of many generations of godly men. "One touch of nature makes the whole world kin;" and the Psalms are alive with human nature, and therefore are still, and ever will be, valued by the thoughtful and the godly, for they come home to every heart that strains upward through life's varied experiences towards GOD. "Deep answereth to deep." The sorrow that each heart knows, the joy that no stranger intermeddleth with, these are echoed from the Psalms in the inner recesses of the souls of men age after age. And as time goes on, and light is given more and more, new depths are discovered, new truths, wider signification.

David, in his little kingdom, gains a victory over some petty prince, who threatened him, and had long harassed his borders and laid waste his people's lands, and so he cries with restful thankfulness, "O thou enemy, thy destructions are come to an end;" and he writes down his hymn of praise and thanksgiving, and it is stored in the national archives,

and the Levite choirs bring it out again and again, and chant it as pæon of victory on many a jubilant fête-day.

But this is not all. Just as the pebble dropped into the mirror-like pool raises a circling ripple that goes on widening and spreading till it has reached the very farthest limits of the water, so these local commemorations find a larger sense in world-wide interests, and in the aspirations of mankind, that are not bounded by the four corners of the earth, nor by the poor possibilities of this present life.

There can never have been a time when men did not lament the evils of the world, the sorrows and disappointments of human life, the waste and destructions of some unseen enemy of man and his peace. Men have had their theories about the origin of this evil, which have varied in different lands and in different ages, but poetry and prayer there must ever have been, expressing the yearnings of suffering man for deliverance, and the hope, more or less clear, that these destructions would end, that this enemy would be overthrown.

As we look back over the ages, we can see plainer than the old-world men could see, that the reign of destruction is sensibly passing away. We read the great stone-book that lies under our feet, and which we in this last time have been counted worthy to open, and we find certain proof of the dominion of destruction in far-off, prehistoric times. The rocks tell little else but a story of destruction, of destructions one after another. Fire, ice, water, earthquake, all have wrought destruction upon the earth, till now their power seems to be well-nigh spent, and the earth is fit for human habitation. So, too, in geological eras there were fierce beasts on land and in sea. There was nothing but mutual destruction. Now these monsters are extinct, and

their weaker successors, the beasts of prey of to-day, are gradually being exterminated, and we can foresee the time when they too will be absolutely extinct, and none but useful and gentle beasts will be found upon the earth.

Look, again, at man's history ; savage man but a higher kind of beast, a destroyer and little more ; old-world kingdoms chiefly devoted to war, great destroyers. Alas that we cannot yet say of the nations, "They learn war no more !" But we are ashamed of ourselves for our wars ; we praise peace ; we count men great nowadays for other work than successful warfare. We begin to see that destroying is but a low occupation ; that creating and building up and improving are nobler employments for man.

The child is a destroyer, but growth in wisdom makes us ashamed of childish ways, and we rejoice in construction, instead of destruction. So, surely, mankind at large has passed its barbarous boyhood, and is becoming full-grown, conscious of glorious powers, eager to use them. The good time has not come yet, but we look on in hope and faith, and say, "Destruction shall come to an end."

Ah, it has been weary waiting ! Think, for example, only of that which the Psalmist dwells upon, the destruction of goodly cities, their very "memorial perished with them." Traverse the wide world, and you will never get far away from ruins. Babylon, Nineveh, Persepolis, Greece, Rome, even America, the "New World," as men called it, is strewed thickly from north to its far-off south with wondrous stone monuments and earth-mounds, that tell of high civilisation, advanced art ; and then, destruction ! Islands in the midst of the ocean, hundreds of miles from any other land, possess ruins that tell us only this, that once men of skill and knowledge lived and thought and worked there.

But who they were, when they lived, what their sculptured writing means, no one can tell us ; "their memorial is perished with them."

Alas ! we sometimes fear that even in our own dear land this may yet be. There are awful elements of destruction working and seething in our midst. If these mad mobs of godless, senseless, debased men burst forth, and come on like a flood, or like a cyclone, or like a devouring fire, then down will go our boasted civilisation, the hard-won liberty and peace and security of Christian ages, and degradation and ruin will reign supreme, and man will have once more marred GOD'S fair world, and wrecked His good purposes.

But we must come nearer home to learn the full bitterness of this law of destruction. Think of the great men that have lived, men of thought and genius, such as come but once in a century, two or three times in the history of a nation, and see the end of these men, painters, poets, musicians, architects, philosophers, inventors ; there is but one end to all ; the wise and the great die as the fool dieth. Nay, how often does the master-mind pass away in life's fulness, while the clown or the useless trifler cumbers the ground for well-nigh a century. Think of Bishop Lightfoot, with all his store of learning, painfully acquired by a singularly gifted mind through many years of hard study, with all his marvellous administrative powers, never suspected till he became a bishop, with all the solid work that he did in ten short years ; what if he had lived on ten or twenty years more ? But no ; Death, the destroyer, lays his hand upon him at sixty-one, and the Church is left lamenting. Read the history of the Church, and weep as you read how her work has been hindered and marred by this enemy, Destruction. Disunion, bad men in power, low principles, human passion, deadly opposition of dogma against dogma, and

theory against theory ; and the result, mere destruction. "An enemy hath done this." Godly men still recite the Psalms, and they find deeper meaning in their verses than ever their authors imagined, and they sigh for deliverance from the enemy, and pray that "destruction may come to a perpetual end."

But we must come closer yet. That which goes on in the world and in the Church has its counterpart in the godly man's heart. There is an enemy there too. There is this terrible power of destruction, working, wasting, growing. If it were not so, would there not be spiritual growth and manhood, instead of the puling infancy of so many of us ? Would there not be the likeness of CHRIST full-grown, seen and read of all men ? Where is baptismal grace ? Where the sevenfold Confirmation gift of the HOLY SPIRIT ? Where the strengthening of the Communion of the Body and Blood of CHRIST ? Where the results of prayer and resolution, of instruction and warning and example ? Alas ! there has been the enemy's work again ; tares sown, the good seed snatched away, trodden down, choked—Destruction !

What then ? Shall we despair, and give it all up ? Nay, that we will not. If we think so weakly, cowardly, stupidly, wickedly, the Word of GOD shall condemn us in the last day ; for thus it is put into our mouths to say, "O thou enemy, destructions are come to a perpetual end ;" and the man of faith says the words, and by them is strengthened and braced up to action and to hope.

Nature teaches it as in a parable. The old-world age of destruction has come to an end. The history of mankind teaches it. We have put away childish things, especially its destructiveness ; we are learning to be men. Changes come slowly ; growth is gradual, not to say tedious ; but there are promises,

there are bright visions of a new heaven and a new earth, of purer bodies, of liberated spirits. There is the mystical foreshadowing of the end of the powers of destruction, Satan, Death, and Hell, hurled away out of GOD'S creation, when they have done their Master's work. For in GOD'S world destruction is ever followed by renewal, higher, better, nobler creations. Now for a while we are in the midst of the conflict. The battle rages, the wounded are many, the dead lie on every side; but we look up, and look on; we believe and rest in GOD. He is almighty. In His own time, He will put all enemies under His feet, and under our feet, if we are with Him, and He with us.

Fourth Sunday after Epiphany.

EVEN AS A BEAST.

THE Seventy-third Psalm is one of several in which the great unsolved problem of the providence of GOD is dwelt upon. Job, Ecclesiastes, and other writers touch upon the same perplexing question, and utter wails and complaints, because they cannot understand why the course of the world goes on as it does. The righteous suffer; the wicked are unpunished; GOD seems far off, indifferent, even unjust and unloving, till the heart of the faithful is grieved, and the temptation comes that GOD'S service is hard and thankless, and that it would be well to give it up, and go the way of the world.

In order to understand fully the intensity of this trial in the Psalmist's days, we must remember that men lived then almost entirely under a system of present reward and punishment. Moses, who had been thoroughly initiated into the Egyptian religious system, which brought the future life incessantly into the present, when he laid down the principles of religion for his people, in order perhaps to sever them the more completely from the errors and superstitions in the midst of which they had so long lived, left out almost all reference to the unseen world and future retribution. He inculcated present obedience, and promised temporal prosperity, as a present reward, and warned the disobedient and rebellious that GOD would send speedy punishment, which would surely find them, and make them suffer.

This was really, however, a retrogression in spiritual knowledge; for Abraham and other primeval worthies had a clear faith in the unseen, and looked onward very much as we Christians are taught to do. Indeed both our LORD and St. Paul intimate that the Mosaic system was merely an interim dispensation, suited to the capacity of an ignorant and degraded people, till they should be educated slowly for better things, and for the Teacher who should give again the Truth long hidden, and display the light that had been obscured and veiled by ordinances and rites that were blindly performed, without a comprehension of their significance and meaning. Prophets and a few other enlightened men understood these things, and were in advance of their time in the knowledge of GOD'S will; but it was hard indeed for ordinary men to be contented and trustful, while GOD'S ways were so incomprehensible, and His providence seemed to contradict His promises.

So the Psalmist cries, "I was even as it were a beast before Thee;" *i.e.*, "I could not understand Thy doings with the world or with myself any more than the poor dumb animal understands man's treatment of him. The young bullock for the first time yoked to the plough, the horse bitted and mounted, the dog that has to learn his master's wishes and to obey them,—I was like these; I could not speak to Thee; Thy words and ways were unintelligible to my poor senses. My instinct taught me to struggle for liberty, and my struggles were useless, and only brought me hurt and pain."

Or we may take the comparison to refer to the narrow range of the beast's ideas. We may not, perhaps, go so far as Gazzali, who said that an animal is only a form through which a stream of matter is incessantly flowing, and that it resembles a cataract or a flame. But this at least seems certain, that the animal lives only in the present

moment ; its eyes are ever down upon the ground ; its thought is but to get food and rest ; it has no hopes, no desire of progress, no noble discontent ; so that, as St. Augustine says, the sturdy bullock rejoices in its rich pasture, and in being allowed to feed and wanton as it pleases, not knowing that all this is but to prepare it for the sacrifice, or for the butcher. Like this is the man who lives a merely animal life, his mental powers uncultivated, his spiritual nature undeveloped, with no thought of GOD, no knowledge of himself or his destiny, and no desire for any.

And now is all this obsolete, past, gone, and done with ? Is there now no trial of faith and patience, as we look out upon the world, as we go through life ourselves, and find out what it really is ? Is there no danger that we should cry out against GOD'S providence, or be tempted to say, "There is no GOD ;" or go plodding on, head down, beast-like, not understanding, and not wanting to understand ? Has it not been said—

" Suppose a real angel came from heaven
To live with men and women, he'd go mad,
If no considerate hand should tie a blind
Across his piercing eyes "?

And again, of what may be seen any day in the back-slums of any great town—

" Faces ! O my GOD,
We call those faces, men's and women's, ay,
And children's ; babies hanging like a rag
Forgotten on their mother's neck ; poor mouths
Wiped clean of mother's milk by mother's blow,
Before they're taught her cursing. Faces ! ah,
We'll call them vices, festering to despairs,
Or sorrows, petrifying to vices : not
A finger-touch of GOD left whole on them,
All ruined, lost ; the countenance worn out
As the garment ; the will dissolute as the act ;
The passions loose and dragging in the dirt,

To trip a foot up at the first free step !
 Those, faces ! 'twas as if you had stirred up hell,
 To heave its lowest dreg-fiends uppermost
 In fiery swirls of slime."

Our boasted nineteenth century civilisation, our progress, our inventions, our machinery, it all seems tending to a deadlock ; and then to a crisis, to a reign of terror and destruction and misery, such as the world has never seen. And men cry out against GOD on account of this, so foolish and ignorant, blaming Him for what is man's fault, not GOD'S :—

" Our Father ! If He heard us, He would surely
 (For they call Him good and mild)
 Answer, smiling down the steep world very purely,
 ' Come and rest with Me, my child.'
 But ' No,' say the children, weeping faster,
 ' He is speechless as a stone.
 Do not mock us ; grief has made us unbelieving.
 We look up for GOD, but tears have made us blind.' "

If we turn to the other extreme pole of nineteenth century life, the cultured, luxurious, artificial life of the rich, what is it, after all, but a kind of higher beast-life ? Selfishness, self-indulgence, pride, refined and subtle cruelty and injury of others, a living in the present only, getting the best possible for self, and utter indifference to the well-being of others or of their suffering and endurances. These higher human animals are clothed in purple and fine linen, and fare sumptuously every day, but there is but the beast's heart within, as GOD and His angels see and judge.

And when the nineteenth century prophet lifts up his voice against all this, in pulpit, by the press, by personal appeal ; and when good men and women labour and endure, and spend and wear themselves out, and feel that they can do so little, and that they ask in vain for help and sympathy, and even for a character for disinterested purity of motive,

then there is the danger that the Psalmist speaks of, that the heart should be soured against men, and in rebellion against GOD.

But there is another sense in which we may take these words. There is another and a better and a worthier attitude towards GOD in the presence of all this miserable state of the world and man's evil pravity. And it is still a state and condition of mind that may be described by this same symbolism, "I was even as it were a beast before Thee." The animals sometimes, indeed, resist man's dominion over them, but how much more commonly do they submit silently, patiently! Every day thousands die to supply man with food from their bodies. The sheep is stripped of its fleece, and yet is dumb before its shearer. The nest is robbed; the young are taken from their dams; the burden is piled upon the back; the collar is adjusted that the toiling beast may give all his strength to life-long work. Who has not wondered at the patient labouring horse or ox? Who has not pitied and resented the ill-used animal, the hunted hare or deer, the poor panting thing that the gun has brought down, and that turns a sad, surprised look at its slayer with its beautiful eyes, before they glaze over in death?

Now we have got upon sacred ground. What does the ancient prophet say about the sheep dumb before her shearers, the lamb going to the slaughter, the hunted hart, with lolling tongue, rushing to the water-brooks, the stripes endured, the heavy burden carried, the death-blow voluntarily submitted to? "I was even as a beast before Thee;" yea, even "a worm and no man." It is of CHRIST, the Son of Man, that all this was said. It was true of Him; and He gave us an example that we should follow His steps. It was GOD'S ordinance that submitted the animal creation to man's dominion.

It was GOD'S permission that gave, not the herb only, but the beast of the field to be man's food. Our LORD rode upon the ass's colt. His will brought the fishes into His disciples' net. Not a sparrow falls to the ground without our Father. Are not we too like the beasts before Him? Does He not expect us to submit to His will, as they submit? Doth He not say it for our sake, that He cares for oxen? Shall we not fulfil our destiny best, and gain the good things our Father has prepared for us most easily and surely, by yielding ourselves absolutely to His hand and will, as our LORD did in His human life, which is our exemplar and pattern.

The beasts are dumb, yet they may be our teachers. Look at your poor dog's honest appealing eyes, when you punish him he scarce knows why. See how he trusts you, loves you, follows you, finds his joy in your presence and affection! It is said that man is the dog's god. If the merciful man is merciful to his beast, are we not of more value to GOD? May we not, in our ignorance of GOD'S will and ways, under the heavy hand of affliction, when the dispensations of Providence are too hard for us to understand, look up silently to GOD, "as it were a beast" before Him, "with no language but a cry," appealing to His pity, His goodness, His power, by our helplessness, the deep of our nothingness calling to the deep of His unapproachable greatness?

A very eminent servant of GOD, upon whose spiritual utterances thousands have leaned, and found strength and help, once said that there have been times when, through utter exhaustion of mind and body, he could but say the Lord's prayer, or some simplest words. Just as Hezekiah in his extremity went up to the Temple, and silently kneeling, spread Rabshakeh's letter before the Lord, so it has perhaps happened to some of us. We have been

crushed to the very ground by some unlooked-for calamity, or some mental conflict, or some heart-breaking bereavement, and we could not even frame words of prayer, but could but just kneel before GOD, and silently sob, and let Him see for Himself our dreadful wound, that He, in His pity, might heal us, if He saw fit; or if not, hold us up with His Hand, that we might not sink down into the depths of despair and utter ruin. Or have we not, like the Psalmist, gone in our dark misery to the sanctuary of GOD, and there found light, or at least power to bear what had been laid upon us? As the poor beasts, terrified by a tempest, seek shelter under some protecting rock, so righteous men of old tell us that they find their refuge in GOD, the Rock of their salvation. So Christian writers speak of the Heart and wounded Side of their LORD as their hiding-place:—

“Rock of Ages, cleft for me,
Let me hide myself in Thee.
O pleasant spot! O place of rest!
O royal rift! O worthy wound!
Come harbour me, a weary guest,
That in the world no ease have found.”

And when that last supreme hour comes to us, as we have so often seen it come to other poor mortals, and we lie speechless, motionless, our very mind and powers of thought held down and hampered by our body's exhaustion and coming dissolution, then may His mercy be with us, His Hand sustain us, His Spirit comfort us; for then indeed we shall be but “as a beast before Him,” and all the pride and glory of manhood will be gone, and there will be but the mute appeal of the creature to its Creator, “Thou who hast made me, have mercy upon me.”

Fifth Sunday after Epiphany.

THE MOST PRECIOUS THINGS.

WHEN we say that one thing is better than another, we do not necessarily mean that the one is bad and the other is good. "Better" is the comparative of "good." So when the wise son of David says, "How much better is it to get wisdom than gold, and to get understanding rather to be chosen than silver," he does not say that it is a good thing to get wisdom and understanding, and a bad thing to get gold and silver, but rather, that it is a good thing to get gold and silver, but a better thing to get wisdom and understanding. In another place he says that wisdom is more precious than rubies. He does not mean to say that rubies are not precious, but he says that, valuable as they are in this world, there is something still more valuable, and that is wisdom. We can better judge of the value of the one, by knowing the real value of the other. Now, in this world, as it is, is it not good to get gold and silver? We cannot get on without money. It is not merely a question of happiness, but a question of life and death. We cannot live without food and clothing and a house of some kind; and as the world is constituted, and human life goes on, we cannot get these things without money. GOD intends us to live. Human life is a good thing in His sight, and therefore gold and silver, which are necessary for its existence and continuance, are good things also. Besides, money itself implies progress and civilisation. Savages

have no money ; they barter one thing for another, and never can advance much till they understand the use of money.

Then the getting of money usually implies industry and talent. Of course, money may be got by bad means, or spent for bad purposes, but we are speaking now of the use, not the abuse, of that which is in itself good ; of those who possess money, but do not allow money to possess them. The idle will not exert themselves to earn money ; the sensual and vicious spend it, and waste it ; the stupid cannot do anything that will produce money ; so, as a general principle, the getting of money implies that he who gets it is not idle, or sensual, or stupid, but that he is clever, hard-working, and useful to others, who are willing to pay him for what he can do for them.

Do we not sometimes forget that JESUS CHRIST worked for His living ? He was paid for His labour. There were in Nazareth and the country round, ploughs and harrows, doors and windows, and all sorts of joiner's work, that had been made by His hand, and for making which His hand had been held out to receive the price, the well-earned wages of honest labour.

The Bible does not say that money is bad, but that the love of it is the root of all evil ; and they often love it most who have least of it. Riches are not bad in themselves, but only when they are abused, just as any other precious thing may be abused. Abraham, and David, and Solomon were very rich, and their riches were given them by GOD as a sign of His favour. Riches are dangerous, just as any other precious thing is dangerous—rank, power, cleverness, beauty, strength. Everything that is best in man, and in this world, is dangerous, and will do harm if not rightly used ; but they are none of them bad in themselves, and

may do great good, and are intended by GOD to do good.

Think of all the most precious and beautiful things the world has ever seen ; they have all cost money. Take one instance. Think of the wonderful churches all over Europe. What an immense sum of money they have cost ! The grand cathedrals of England, France, Germany ; the exquisitely beautiful churches of Italy, with their marbles and mosaics, that make every other style of ornamentation seem poor by comparison. Or to come to works of mere utility. Reckon up what the railroads of the world have cost. How could our manufactories go on without money ? The water we drink, the food we eat, the towns we live in—all these demand money, and plenty of it, before they can be ours.

There can be no question, then, that gold and silver are good and precious things. We may imagine some condition and some sort of ethereal beings to whom they would be useless, but we are concerned just now with this world, as it is, and with human beings like ourselves, and we see quite clearly that money is one of the most important and indispensable things in human life. We see, too, that if there is anything more important and more valuable than money, it must be a very precious thing indeed. Now, the wise man says that wisdom and understanding are such things. Let us try and see what he means.

We have spoken of beautiful things, and of useful things, and we said that they cost a vast amount of money ; but did the money produce them ? Money did not invent the Printing-Press, or the Steam-Engine. Money did not inspire the painter of the Madonna di San Sisto, or the architect of Cologne Cathedral. Nor is this all. There are other glorious things besides these. Money did not discover Vaccination, or the art of destroying pain during dreadful

operations. Money did not read the heavens and the earth like a book, or analyse the matter of the universe, from the vast and distant sun to the dust that floats in the air. Money has not made our great statesmen, or generals, or poets, the men whom the world will remember and honour as long as it lasts. Many of the world's greatest benefactors have not been rich, but the wisdom and the understanding which they possessed have brought mankind good things that no money can buy, for they are above all price. You cannot buy a Newton, a Shakespeare, a Stephenson, an Arkwright. These men came into the world, we know not whence, we know not how. Their wisdom and understanding are GOD's gifts ; they cannot be manufactured ; they cannot be purchased. No one can even reckon up the money value of that which men of genius have been the means of giving to the world. Money has been the useful drudge to carry out the splendid designs of great minds ; but by this very fact we see which is the greater and nobler. We see how much wisdom and understanding are better than gold and silver.

But is this all that Solomon meant ? He was great and wise. He asked GOD to give him wisdom, and GOD showered upon him all His best gifts, and lavished upon him at once the varied endowments that ordinarily are doled out singly to a multitude of individuals, centuries apart. But what did this divine wisdom of his esteem most ? What did he ask for, when the Almighty's Hand was opened to give him whatever he desired most ? What did he, in his wisdom, select from all the treasury of GOD, as most worthy of man's possession ? What did the experience of his life teach him as to the comparative value of GOD'S gifts to man ? He asked of GOD wisdom. The wisdom that GOD had already given him made him desire more wisdom ; for the truest wisdom is to know our own ignorance.

And what is true wisdom ? Let Job's magnificent words tell us : " Where shall wisdom be found, and where is the place of understanding ? Man knoweth not the price thereof, neither is it found in the land of the living. The depth saith, It is not in me ; and the sea saith, It is not with me. It cannot be gotten for gold, neither shall silver be weighed for the price thereof. It cannot be valued with the gold of Ophir, with the precious onyx, or the sapphire. The gold and the crystal cannot equal it, and the exchange of it shall not be for jewels of fine gold. No mention shall be made of coral, or of pearls, for the price of wisdom is above rubies. The topaz of Ethiopia shall not equal it, neither shall it be valued with pure gold. Whence then cometh wisdom, and where is the place of understanding ? GOD understandeth the way thereof, and He knoweth the place thereof. And unto man He saith, Behold the fear of the LORD, that is wisdom, and to depart from evil, is understanding."

It is a noble thing for man by wisdom to discover the laws of nature, the secret mysteries of creation. It is his truest honour to rule the world, to become more and more its master, to rifle its treasures, and use them for his own advantage ; to discover its forces, and to turn them hither and thither, at his will, to work for him, and make him still more powerful ; to analyse his own wonderful nature, in its threefold organisation, and to develop, to improve, his faculties, ever advancing, ever improving. But the highest employment of wisdom is to trace all good things up to their Source, to be content with no second causes, but to push upward to the great Prime Cause of all things, to be athirst for GOD, and to be unable to slake the thirst in any other, any lower fountain. Solomon, the wisest of men ; Solomon, prince of peace, son of David, taught this. He preached the nobility of wisdom, and

showed men how to get it. But a greater than Solomon has appeared, the Prince of Peace, the King of Righteousness, the Son of David, JESUS the CHRIST. He, we are told, is the Wisdom of GOD. He is the source of all wisdom; by Him all things were made. He has revealed the true wisdom, that had been hid and lost, for He has taught us what GOD is, and how we may know Him; and possessing Him, possess all things.

And He, by His life and His words, gave to the world a new and higher rule than the world had ever before known or imagined. He said, "Money is good, but it is better to give than to receive it. Riches are good, but holy poverty is better. Happiness is good, but self-sacrifice is higher and nobler."

This wisdom was foolishness to human nature. He, who was its author and source, was rejected by the world. He was valued, and sold for thirty pieces of silver; but to those who believed on Him, He was precious. His disciples accepted His teaching, rejoiced in it, lived by its precepts, died to attest its truth. This wisdom gave new life to the world, that had wearied itself with lies. It constructed the wondrous temple of GOD, the Catholic Church, and built up a new and better civilisation upon the foundation of its precepts.

Nor was this all. The work of CHRIST was not in the world only, but in the individual heart of man. There, by His Spirit, wisdom builds her house; there that which is hid from the worldly-wise is revealed to His children, who become wise unto salvation. This is the true, the highest wisdom, to know GOD, and JESUS CHRIST, whom He hath sent. Riches can do much in this world, but we must leave them all behind, when we die. This wisdom is our support in death, and will live and grow, when we pass out of this world into the life beyond. Inven-

tions of noble and beautiful things make men great in this world, but presently the earth and all that is therein will be burnt up, but the fire that tries every man's work will not hurt this true wisdom, and it will be still highly esteemed in that new heavens and new earth that will endure for ever.

In St. John's visions of the unseen world, we read of gold and precious gems. We know that he does not speak of the treasures of this world, but of things more valuable, more enduring than they. The true disciples of JESUS CHRIST are laying up treasures there now, day by day, where no thief can enter. They may be poor here, but they will be rich by-and-by. Nay, they are rich now, "having nothing, yet possessing all things," for CHRIST is theirs, Whose are all things. Yes, godliness is great gain, for we brought nothing into the world, but we may turn all to gold in the better land whither we go, and "the gold of that land is good."

It has been well said, that a man's riches consist, not so much in the greatness of his possessions, as in the fewness of his wants. The enlightened man has but one want, JESUS CHRIST. Other things are good, but this is better than all. Lovers and friends are dear; husband, wife, parents, children, health, money, good name, these are precious; but there is One dearer than all, for whose sake all must be given up, if needs be. He gave Himself for us; we must give ourselves, all we have, and all we are, to Him; and he that loses his life for His sake, the same shall save it. Judas sold his LORD for a handful of money. Still men lightly esteem Him and sell their rights in Him for a mess of pottage; but to those who believe, He is precious. Nothing can separate them from Him. Nothing would bribe them to give Him up. In times of old, fire and torture and wild beasts were tried to force the Christian to give up his LORD, but they were tried in vain.

In these days we are not persecuted thus, but there are round us powers that try hard to lead us away from our LORD; now force; now seductions; now the arguments of those who no longer serve Him. May He give us wisdom to choose Him as highest, best, the only good! May we have strength to stand firm; faith to look up beyond all passing things; courage to say with that noble servant of GOD, St. Paul, "Who shall separate us from the love of CHRIST? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? Nay, for I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of GOD, which is in CHRIST JESUS, our LORD."

Sixth Sunday after Epiphany.

MAN AND SATAN.

THE Church very emphatically draws our attention to-day to the remarkable statement of the Apostle in the Epistle, by quoting his pregnant words in the Collect. Men's opinions and theories, with respect to the powers of evil, have varied in different times, and in different conditions of civilisation, but the Bible and the Church maintain the same attitude, and hold the same unvarying doctrine with regard to Satan and his host. In the present day the tendency is to explain away, or actually to deny, the existence of evil spirits. Books have been written to argue against the possibility of a beneficent Creator allowing an evil power to have place in the midst of His work. The very idea has been declared contrary to reason, and to have had its origin in an age of ignorance and superstition. Ridicule has been called in to assist argument, and the follies and extravagances of popular legends have been gravely examined, to throw discredit upon the whole theory.

There is no doubt that a vast amount of unauthorised statements has accumulated round the original belief, and that, in order to arrive at a true conclusion, these mischievous accretions must be unsparingly cleared away. Poets, painters, emotional religious writers and preachers, mediæval legends, and very largely Milton's "Paradise Lost," all these have created a popular idea of Satan and his

angels which is strangely at variance with, and sometimes contradictory to, the teaching of the Catholic Church.

The direct and dogmatic teaching of Holy Scripture is by no means full and exhaustive. But the way in which the New Testament writers speak incidentally of Satan, his powers and his work, leads us to the conclusion that they had received from our LORD a definite and clear revelation, part of which is probably lost, and the remainder forms the traditional doctrine of the Church. Thus, in Genesis we read only that the serpent tempted Eve; in Revelation, St. John speaks incidentally of the Temptation being the work of Satan, as if it were an established fact. There cannot be a shadow of doubt that Holy Scripture and the Church maintain that Satan is a definite person, and that there is, besides, a multitude of spiritual beings whose nature is evil, and whose actions are hostile and injurious to man. Certain characteristics are ascribed to these beings, mental faculties superior to those of man, great knowledge of, and power over, the forces of nature, vastly long existence, rebellion against the laws and dominion of GOD, the will and the ability to seduce men from obedience to GOD, innate disposition to hatred, murder, lying, impurity, cunning, and, above all, pride.

The unanswered question respecting the origin of evil does not find its solution in all this. The evil host is doubtless of inconceivable antiquity, but evil must have existed before them. They may or may not have been angels, for we may well imagine that there are multitudes of varieties of intelligent reasonable creatures, besides men and angels, as we know them. But it is but reasonable to suppose that, like ourselves, they had a period of probation, that they were free, and that they chose evil instead of good, probably through pride, and lust for liberty from

subjection to GOD. St. Jude speaks of other beings who fell in this way, and who, unlike the evil spirits, are enchained prisoners ; while Satan and those with him range freely throughout the universe. It has been surmised that Satan held sway in this earth long before reasonable man appeared, and that envy led him to tempt Adam, the new lord of the world, to obey him, rather than GOD, and so rendered him and his inheritance into his power, so that Satan became, by right of conquest, Prince of this world. He claimed this power and right in the presence of our LORD during the Temptation, and our LORD did not contradict him, or deny the fact ; and the whole creation groaneth and travaileth, waiting for redemption from its usurping master and lord.

There are, too, mysterious words respecting " war in heaven ;" as if the hosts of evil tried to vanquish the obedient sons of GOD there by force, and so get possession of them and their domain, as they had conquered man, and seized his inheritance. Holy Scripture evidently assumes that the whole universe is peopled with spirits good and bad, and that our spirits live among them, just as our bodies live in the midst of healthful air and gases, and of noxious vapours and disease germs. We have to undergo and to resist the influence of " principalities and powers, the rulers of the darkness of this world, of spiritual powers of wickedness in heavenly places." And so they are spoken of in Scripture as bringing trouble upon GOD'S servants, as deceiving the whole world, as able to rule the elements, and bring injury and destruction upon men.

If we think of the knowledge and experience that such intelligences must have, after thousands of years of existence, we can imagine how vast must be their power. They must be conversant with the secrets of nature, and the occult laws of the universe, just as the holy angels must be, and are so described

in Scripture. They understand human nature perfectly, and can doubtless do easily that which would seem to us miraculous. The early Christian writers, who were familiar with heathenism, as it was before CHRIST came, do not hesitate to assert that evil spirits procured human worship, under the form and title of the gods, and that by their means oracles were given, and wonders of all kinds were performed. And modern travellers, in the remote regions of the world, Du Chaillu and others, and modern missionaries, Bishop Calloway, for instance, give appalling accounts of the terror that savage peoples feel of evil spirits, and how they try to propitiate them by sacrifices, just as in old times men "offered their sons and their daughters to devils," their most precious possessions, to ward off the anger and injuries of the demon gods. This seems to be the natural condition of uncultured man. He has lost the knowledge of the great and good GOD, but he believes in powerful and malignant spirits, and tries to bribe them to spare him.

Intellectual progress leads men to just the opposite error. Ignorance tends to superstition, culture to scepticism, to materialism, and Sadducism, denying all spiritual existences. So it has been said that Satan's masterpiece of stratagem is to persuade men to deny his existence, while he leads them to become like himself, in pride, and in rebellion against GOD. He must possess vast intellectual power, enormous knowledge of the laws and the powers of the universe, and it is evidently possible for men gifted with similar genius and similar scientific learning to be filled with pride and self-sufficiency, and to cease to acknowledge and to worship the great GOD. In an intellectual age the seductions of a high intelligence that is alien to GOD must be most dangerous, as they are most natural. The desire for knowledge was the impulse that formed the basis of man's first temptation; it will probably be also the temptation of the last age

of mankind. The period before the Flood seems to have been distinguished by vast knowledge, material progress, boundless luxury and sensuality, and intimate commerce with the spirits of evil. Our LORD and His apostles speak of the time before the final judgment as similar in every respect. We can well understand that there may be mental intoxication as well as bodily, mental luxury, mental sensuality, mental and intellectual perversion and ruin, by excessive indulgence, by a want of proportion and economy, a neglect of one set of faculties, while another set is abnormally developed and made monstrous, overlying and injuring functions which are necessary to healthy life and well-being. Knowledge is good, but Satan's special characteristic is the perversion of good into evil. He is most dangerous when he seems to be an angel of light.

We see, then, by reasoning backward, that intellectual greatness might lead spirits of majestic attributes into a revolt from the dominion of GOD, just as we see the possibility of the wickedness ascribed to Satan and his host by the awful wickedness of which human nature is capable; and from this we can easily pass on to conceive such a period as is spoken of in Scripture, when, the belief in GOD being generally thrown away, the world shall see such a reign of evil as has never before been known, and when lying wonders, and direct dealing with powerful spirits, shall produce "signs and wonders which, if it were possible, should deceive the very elect."

It is easy to scoff at all this, and to propound the dilemma, either that GOD is not almighty, or that He is not all-loving, if He permits all this. There is surely a third alternative, that we are not in a position to judge the case, not knowing all the circumstances. We are surrounded with mysteries, and this is but one of them. We know but a very little of our own history, and our own nature. We

know nothing of the enormous universe, except a few facts, as we suppose they are, which we have lately discovered in this little, insignificant corner of the cosmos, and in the small fraction of time of which we can take observation. We know nothing of GOD, but the little that He has been pleased to reveal. It becomes us, then, to be modest. It is indecent and ridiculous for us to dogmatise. Our proper attitude is that of a devout agnosticism. Our wisest conclusion is to accept the position that our LORD assigns to us, and praises, that of little children, fearing, obeying, loving our Father in heaven. St. Paul tells us that life is at present an enigma, a problem which we cannot solve, a question of which we have not the answer. It will be doubtless plain enough one day when we see it all round. When the answer to a riddle is given, we say, "Of course; why could I not see that before?"

Let us try and see, then, what the Apostle means when he says that "the Son of GOD was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil." We must at once clear away a misapprehension. There is here no declaration of a conflict between GOD and Satan, as between rival deities. The Manichean theory of a benevolent Deity, ever opposed by an equally powerful, malignant God, finds no support in the Bible, or the Church, though much popular religion is really based upon such a baseless figment; for which, again, Milton has to be blamed. Satan is but a creature, not a God. The Bible nowhere represents the Almighty fighting against Satan, as if he were a power worthy of His opposition. The "war in heaven" is between Michael and his angels, and Satan and his angels. The war on earth is between man and Satan; and Satan will at last be overcome by the perfect Man, CHRIST JESUS, just as Satan is daily fought and overcome by men and women and children.

There are dim foreshadowings of this in old-world myths, such as that of Osiris. Man always hoped for a Saviour, a Leader, against evil. A thoughtful writer says: "Our Saviour's life and work impress me as things done by the way, just as a man upon some vast enterprise might scatter a few bounties in a village he passed through. CHRIST'S work is to destroy the work of the devil, whose kingdom is invisible. Christianity stands up like some plant of foreign growth, which carries our thoughts to scenes far distant, and conditions of existence altogether dissimilar. What do we know of the unseen but most real world? May it not have dread necessities? May it not be, in a sense wide as the universe, necessary that He should suffer?"

But be this as it may; there remains the practical and blessed promise, "Resist the devil, and he will flee from you"—from you. You cannot be compelled, unless you will it so. Satan is mighty, but not almighty; and "I can do all things through CHRIST, that strengtheneth me." Satan can tempt, but he cannot force us. He may tell us that we "shall be as gods," if we obey him. We will be "as little children" rather, and say, "Our Father, deliver us from the evil one," and so that wicked one shall not touch us. He gains dominion over souls by seduction, not by force; little by little, by leading men and women to foster the growth of passions like his own. So our LORD saw his work going on in the plotting of the Jews to slay Him, and said, "Ye are of your father, the devil; for he was a murderer from the beginning." He saw it, too, in the soul of Judas, and said, "One of you is a devil;" and in that of Peter, when He turned upon him and cried, "Get thee behind me, Satan." So an apostle warns women not to be "slanderers and false accusers," as our translation has it, but as it is literally, "Do not be devils;" for

such prostitution of the powers of speech is specially devil's work ; for he accuses and slanders GOD to man, and man to GOD.

His title *διαβόλος* is derived from *διαβαλλειν*, "to throw an obstacle ;" for he sets himself between man and GOD, maligning both, each to the other, now lying, now flattering ; as he is represented in the temptation of Eve, and in the temptation of our LORD.

But "the Son of GOD was manifested that He might destroy the works of the devil." In and by Him men and women, compassed with infirmity, triumph over this mighty spirit ; "out of weakness being made strong," "bruising Satan under their feet ;" with and in their LORD "crushing his head," treading on serpents, and suffering no hurt.

The trials and sufferings, that Satan and the other spirits of evil are permitted to bring upon the faithful, do but redound to the glory of GOD, and the perfecting of His saints, just as fire purifies silver. And so Satan has been compared to a leech, that has no thought but to satisfy its lust for blood, while it is unconsciously draining away poison, and restoring a sick man to health.

Probably GOD'S rule will be restored little by little ; not by His almighty fiat, but by man's acts ; just as it was lost in the world by man's act ; the work of the new Adam undoing the work of the old Adam.

Then cometh the end, the Judgment, "the Crisis," as it is literally, the final separation of good from evil. Then the victory of CHRIST will be seen, in the triumph of His servants over their enemy ; and so St. John tells us how he saw the hosts of the saved, and that they had overcome Satan, "because of the blood of the Lamb, and because of the word of their testimony." Then at last the evil ones are cast into the abyss ; judged by the Man CHRIST JESUS, and His saints, men also, sitting with Him on His

throne. So will man have regained the lost kingdom, and "when all things shall be subdued unto Him, then shall the Son also Himself be subject unto Him that put all things under Him, that GOD may be all in all." Then are revealed the new heavens and the new earth, with the holy city prepared as a bride, adorned for her husband, and a great voice is heard saying, "Behold the tabernacle of GOD is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people; and GOD Himself shall be with them, and be their GOD; and GOD shall wipe away all tears from their eyes, and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain; for the former things are passed away."

Septuagesima.

LIFE AND THOUGHT.

THE man who thinks is ever and again surprised to find how many men there are who do not think. He is naturally disposed to assume that other men are like himself, but he is constantly having his theory upset by some startling fact, which shows him that many men are either deficient in the reasoning faculty, or that they make little or no use of it. He sees mistakes made and errors accepted for truth. He sees men pass through life without taking the slightest interest in problems and questions which he cannot help thinking about every day.

History repeats itself. Mathematicians can calculate about commercial panics, murders, suicides, accidents, diseases, because men live such routine lives that you may reckon upon their actions like the movements of a machine. It is this strange fact that makes it clear to CHRIST'S minister that he must not expect any great success in his mission. If he thinks only of the dignity of his message, of its importance to mankind at large, and to each reasonable and immortal being in particular, he feels certain that his office must command respect and attention, and he is disposed to resent it with heat and indignation when he finds either that he is without hearers, or that they are languid and indifferent. But when he calls to mind the persistent and invincible folly of mankind; when he compares his own experience with the testimony of every one who has preceded him, his Divine Master Himself included, then his

surprise ceases ; he accepts his position, and knows that want of success must only stimulate greater effort, and more persistent earnestness.

The Church too is prepared for all this. Empirical enthusiasts are all for trying some new scheme, inaugurating new sects, inventing panaceas, bringing out some novel method which is to convert the world all at once. The Church looks calmly on, having in her long experience seen all this attempted and fail many times. She has no faith in novelties and nostrums ; she has high authority for the conviction that, if men will not hear the old teachings in the old way, they will not be persuaded by startling apparitions and frantic appeals ; and by the same authority she leaves men alone, sorrowfully indeed and reluctantly, yet firmly and without relenting, knowing that each reasonable being is at last responsible to GOD for his conduct, and for the fate of his soul.

So year by year the Gospel message is proclaimed, and men hear and accept it, or hear and reject it, or keep out of the way of hearing it, using their liberty, and taking the consequences. Year by year the cycle of teaching is repeated, the sequence of fast and festival, of commemoration and preparation, is gone through. Prayer and worship, sacrament and ordinance, come in their due course, and men avail themselves of them, or not. The Church is bound to do this, but she is not bound to make men devout and holy ; that rests with men themselves, and they cannot be compelled.

Now, to-day the Church is at a special point in her teaching and testimony. It is not one of the great festivals, yet it is an important starting-point. The great and fundamental truths of the faith are brought forward by her, one by one, in regular order and succession, that not one may be omitted, that each may have its due prominence and its fitting attention. At this season sin and its consequences form the theme of the Church's instruction ; sin, in

its origin and beginning, as revealed in the sacred record of man's creation and fall ; sin, in its personal character, as it attaches itself to the individual soul, and as it must be put away by conscious and individual action ; sin, as GOD regards it, and as He dealt with it in the tremendous act at Calvary. From Septuagesima till Easter this momentous mystery is dealt with by the Church, and she urges thinking and responsible and immortal men to join with her in her thoughts, her prayers, her meditations. And the Gospel to-day seems to give the keynote to all this, when it says to us, "Go ye also into the vineyard." Lents have passed ; generations of men have heard, and are gone ; but, like the lord of the vineyard, here again is the voice of the Church speaking to us, "Go ye into the vineyard." Others have had their day and their turn ; now they hear no more ; for them the Church's work is done ; her responsibility is over ; coming generations are pressing on, their day has nearly come, the Church is ready for them ; but for the moment she is occupied with us ; she looks each one of us in the face and says, "Go thou into the vineyard."

What does she mean ? What would she have us do ? What is the vineyard, and where, and what must we do there ? The vineyard is human life, our life, our work. The Master has sent us into the world for a purpose. The Church reminds us of this, and bids us see to it. It is a wide and deep and broad subject, for no two men's lives are just alike. Life with its manifold phases ; life hurrying away so fast ; life transforming us, as we use it ; we are called to-day, and all through this season which begins to-day, to think gravely about life, about our own life.

We began by saying that men do not think. How little do men think about life ! Men live, and they are so busy, or so idle, or so stupid, or so undisciplined, that they do not think. They take life as it comes, broken up into day and night, business and

rest, trouble and pleasure, youth and age, but they do not think about it as a whole, as a grave reality, as a personal responsibility. Now the Church says to us, "Will you think about it? Will you turn aside, and think about yourself, your life, as you think sometimes about a matter of business, or a question of politics, or anything else that really interests you at a particular time?" With some it is the first call, as with those invited to Confirmation. With others it is the third, the sixth, the ninth, or the eleventh hour of the short day of their passing life. And the state of the vineyard is different with each. With some everything has to be done; life is before them, a blank sheet of paper upon which they may write what they will. To others there seems nothing to be done, because they do not look into matters. If they will but begin to see for themselves, they will find mischief going on; here pruning needed; there weeds running rampant; there vermin and blight; here the fence needing repair. In the case of others Solomon's picture of the sluggard's vineyard is realised, and there is small hope of ever undoing past neglect. This vineyard yields a fine crop, but it is of wild grapes only; that has changed its character altogether; some Ahab has rooted up the vines, and turned the vineyard into a garden of herbs. A clever, active man, but every faculty perverted; life turned to a channel that GOD never intended for it.

The man who works hardest in his vineyard knows best how much there is always to be done, and that he cannot afford to neglect it, or waste his time. It is the man who keeps away from his vineyard who is under the delusion that nothing has to be done; the man who does not think; who is a stranger to himself; who has no aim and purpose in life, as to self-culture and progress; who forgets his responsibility to GOD, and that his present liberty will end in the inquiry as to how he has used it.

Sexagesima.

THE CHERUBIM.

WHAT were the Cherubim, that were set as guardians of Paradise and the Tree of Life ? The inquiry is not one of mere idle curiosity. There seems to be some deep and fundamental truth shadowed forth in to-day's Lesson, instruction practical and evangelical, CHRIST and His mediatorial office, sin and its pardon, the wonderful relationship between the eternal GOD and the created universe, with its manifold and unfathomed marvels.

There is no further mention of Cherubim till the details of the Tabernacle are given. Then we read of two golden Cherubim overshadowing the Mercy-seat with outstretched wings and faces turned downwards towards the Ark. And when Solomon's Temple was built, in the Holy of Holies, within the veil, in the silent and dark sanctuary, entered only once a year by the High-priest, there brooded two great mysterious figures, whose wings touched each side-wall, dimly seen through the clouds of incense, but to be touched with the sacrificial blood brought from the altar without. In the second Temple there seem to have been no Cherubim. The author of the Epistle to the Hebrews says of those in the first Temple, "Of these we cannot now speak particularly," as if the memory of them had partially passed away. In the Psalms, and in some other places, we read of the Almighty as "sitting between the Cherubim;" and in the visions of Ezekiel and of St. John there is

much said of the Cherubim. For the first time some description is given of their appearance, and we find that they are beings of a nature utterly different from anything that we are acquainted with. They are described as partly human, partly animal, and they are winged like the angels. The lion, the ox, and the eagle, the perfection of the wild beast, the domestic animal, and the bird family, lend their characteristics to make up their attributes. They are full of eyes, within and without. They are called "The Living Ones," as if gifted with superabundant life, the highest vital powers of created nature.

As we try and picture to ourselves these living creatures, so described, we find that they have more or less found realisation already in other and unexpected places. In the colossal monuments of Egypt, of Assyria, of Persia, that have survived to our own day, there are seen sphinxes, winged bulls, eagle-headed creatures with human form and with sweeping majestic wings, impressing us, even now in their mutilated condition, and torn away from their dignified surroundings, with a sense of awe, as personifying strength, and all the perfections of the animal world, and standing as guardians at the precincts of the Temples. We cannot but think that there is here a memory of some primeval revelation, a distortion of a truth half remembered. Just as there is a memory of the Creation, and of the Fall of man, of the Flood, and of other prehistoric events, among all nations, whose records remain to us in every part of the world, so there seem to be dim recollections of the Tree of Life, and of the guarding Cherubim. The strange animal-worship of Egypt, and of other ancient countries, most probably arose, partly at least, from such imagery. The bull, the lion, the eagle, were placed among the celestial constellations, and the sun's progress through them marked the seasons. The wonderful powers of nature, the instincts and

attributes of animals, were believed to indicate a divine indwelling, and to prove an incarnation of the Deity. We smile and pity, as we contemplate all this; but is it not wiser, and more reverent, to search for the rudimentary truth amidst the superincumbent mass of errors, with St. Paul at Athens, to claim fellowship and community of worship, even with those who worship ignorantly, and to confirm our own faith by the involuntary testimony of the wide world, and of mankind in every age?

For what seems to be the meaning of that which is told us of these glorious beings, as far as we can discern, as through a glass darkly, their nature and functions? We commonly speak of angels, men, and animals, and we conclude that we have thus exhausted the possibilities of created life. But are we wise and reasonable in so doing? Look at the marvellous variety of animal life; add to this those vast unknown fauna of geological ages, many of them, as Hugh Miller said, "as unlike anything now existing, as the monstrous figures upon a Japanese vase are unlike any creature that now walks the earth." Add, again, the infinite possibilities of life in planets and systems that differ from our own, and where shall we put a bound to the fecundity and variety of nature? Where shall we find a bond to tie the hands of GOD, or a measure to define the limits of the mind of the infinite Creator? The Indian Prince who would not believe that water could become solid as ice, is logical, compared with nineteenth century Christians, if they cannot accept the Scriptural testimony of creatures of GOD, other and higher than those that we meet with in our everyday walk. We are not Manicheans, who declare that all matter is evil. The Incarnation of the Son of GOD has taught us better. "GOD saw all things that He had made, and behold they were very good." All created things have a unity. Dead mineral matter, gases, vegetable life, the animal world,

what are they but parts of the one creation, which culminates in man? And with that creation GOD has inseparably joined Himself, when He became flesh and was made Man.

And shall we despise the animals, as unworthy of the care of GOD? Whence come their marvellous powers and instincts, but from the infinite mind of GOD? We stand amazed, and full of admiration, at many of the senses and capabilities of the animals, which far transcend anything with which we men are endued. Why may there not be creatures of GOD that combine some of the human and some of the animal qualities, and so show forth the glory of their Maker, and fulfil some special work in the boundless economy of nature? Why may there not be a future use and destiny in the lower orders of creation, not dreamed of in narrow philosophy? The whole creation groans and travails. St. Paul says there will be deliverance; some new heavens and new earth, which our poor present senses cannot conceive. The animal cannot understand us. There is much that we cannot understand; but that does not prove that other things do not exist, other intelligences, other modes of life, space of more than three dimensions, good things to be revealed, that eye cannot see, nor mind of man yet comprehend.

We imagine, then, these mysterious Beings, for long ages guarding the entrance to Paradise and the approach to the Tree of Life. There they hovered, a proof that these desired, but unattainable, good things existed. Towards them doubtless the faithful turned in worship, and from their presence Cain and his descendants turned away, anxious to forget all that they implied. Till the Flood came, and swept away all traces of Paradise, they held watch and ward, and the memory of them seems to be traced in the mythological legends of terrible fire-breathing monsters guarding treasures and sacred places.

And when once more GOD revealed Himself and taught the true way of worship, then Moses, according to the pattern shown to him in the mount, places Cherubim at the entrance of the holy place, where the approach to GOD was permitted ; and finally Ezekiel and St. John see mysterious visions of these exalted existences, very near to the awful presence of the ineffable and incomprehensible Deity. Then comes the Incarnation of the Son of GOD. He takes created nature into His Being ; Himself the beginning of all Creation. By His flesh He becomes one with the universe, human, animal, material ; and so He stands as Mediator between GOD and man, a bridge to span over the gulf rent by sin between the creature and the Creator, a ladder to reach from earth to heaven. He holds the keys of hell and of death. He opens and shuts. He dies to give life to a dead world. As in Adam all died, so in CHRIST are all made to live. And just before He dies, out of the darkness, He speaks some memorable words. A penitent soul, type of all penitents, appeals to Him ; and to him, and to all of like faith, He says, "To-day thou shalt be with Me in Paradise." Paradise ! Man's home in the days of his purity ; Paradise, that had been lost ; Paradise, that GOD'S highest creatures had guarded, warning off all approach ; Paradise, now restored ; its gates flung open ; He the Door ; He the Way ; by His own Blood cleansing the sin of the world ; the great High-Priest passing between the Cherubim, rending the veil, opening the kingdom of heaven to all believers. So St. John saw in his visions the Tree of Life, no longer fenced and forbidden, but free to all, in the new heavens and the new earth, where there shall be no more curse, where GOD'S servants shall serve Him, and see His Face, and where the LORD GOD giveth them light.

Quinquagesima.

LOVE, OR NOTHING.

THE word "Charity," which is so especially brought before us in the services to-day, stands for what is usually translated Love. It is Love that St. Paul commends so highly. It is Love, he says, that abideth for ever. It is Love that is so indispensable to the Christian character, that to be without it is to be no Christian at all. Let us try and understand what he means, and we shall perhaps do so best by going back a long way in the history of mankind.

However they may differ in some respects, Bible history and scientific theory agree in this, that man has progressed from a lower to a higher condition. Man is an animal, as far as his body and its instincts are concerned; and thoughtful men, in every literature, liken men's lower passions to those of the beasts. The angry man, rushing upon his victim, is evidently like the beast of prey, thirsting for blood. The malignant, backbiting slanderer, who creeps unseen, and whispers the poisonous falsehood that ruins some one's reputation, is like the venomous, crawling snake. The peacock, displaying its gaudy plumage, is like an extravagantly dressed woman. The glutton and the drunkard are like the over-gorged vulture or the filthy swine. The idle and frivolous, who waste the precious years of youth, are compared to the gay butterfly that flits in the summer sunshine, but is killed by the first autumn frost.

In the same way, a better set of men are said to

find their counterparts in other animals and their habits. The industrious, plodding worker, who has no time for pleasure, no taste for literature or the fine arts or the sciences, is not unlike the bee, that seems only to live that it may work, that works on and on, day by day, all its little span of life, and then dies and leaves all behind. The statesman, the man who is always engaged in public affairs, reminds us of the ant, or the beaver, working for his community, sacrificing himself and his personal feelings, that national or local projects may be carried into effect. While the faithful subordinate, permitting a more powerful will to use his strength, in return for wages, is like the horse or the ox, that patiently toils that man may grow his crops or travel on his business.

But there is one general likeness between man, as he is by nature, and the animals; and that is selfishness. The animal eats, sleeps, and breeds. Each animal takes care of itself, gets the best for itself; the weaker fares badly; the sick and the aged are disregarded, and left to their fate. Nature has no pity; the strong have their own way; the fittest survive, and the rest are got rid of.

Savage man acts very much in the same way; and however much men may be advanced and civilised, this animal selfishness, this rule of "Every one for himself," this instinct of self-preservation, lies not far beneath the surface. Each one of us is conscious of it. Circumstances bring it out. Look at a crowd panic-stricken, rushing out of a building that has caught fire. Where is your courtesy? Where your gallant consideration for women? Where your pity for children, for the weak and aged? All are gone, and the mere instinct of self-preservation asserts itself, and carries all before it, blindly, cruelly.

But it will be said there is love in human nature even at its lowest. All the world over, and in every age of mankind, the mother has shown love to her

child ; love that is ready to suffer, to sacrifice self for the sake of the helpless fruit of her womb. Yes, it has always been so. But, after all, this is not very much. The most savage beast of prey, the lowest animal, displays exactly the same instinctive care of its young, the same fearless disregard of its own comfort, and even of its life, while it protects its offspring. And we may go further than this, and yet not rise above animal instinct. The ant, the bee, all animals that are gregarious and live in numbers together, recognise the individuals of their own community as friends, while they regard all others as enemies. Just so savages are true to their own tribes, but regard all others as natural foes, to be fought with, and if possible killed and pillaged. And nations and individuals, that boast their civilisation, display similar rules and practice. A man is very apt to have a different way of treating his own relations, from that in which he considers himself entitled to act towards others. The typical Englishman thinks foreigners very inferior beings, and fair game for ridicule or overreaching. The seducer has no scruple in treating another man's wife or daughter as he would not like his own to be treated. The general, who is considerate for his own army, and is personally humane and kind-hearted, uses all his skill to slaughter as many of the enemy as he possibly can, without the smallest scruple.

Now, man has been gradually educated to cast aside the mere animal principle of existence, the mere animal rule of life and practice, and to take a higher rule ; and when the proper time had come, the Son of GOD Himself came into the world as a Man, and taught mankind the highest rule of life, the rule of love ; nothing absolutely new, but the expansion and development of the natural rule of love. All love is elevating, even sexual love, as one of our oldest poets says—

" Such is the power of that sweet passion,
That it all sordid baseness doth expel,
And the refined mind doth newly fashion
Unto a fairer form ; "

or, as a living author has it, that—

" There is no more subtle master under heaven,
Not only to keep down the base in man,
But teach high thought, and amiable words,
And courtliness, and the desire of fame,
And love of truth, and all that makes a man."

The father loves his own child, but JESUS took other people's children into His arms, and lovingly blessed them, as if they were His own. A man cares for his own flesh and blood, his own community, his own countrymen, but JESUS taught that all men are brethren, that they have one common Father, and that brotherly love must be as wide as the world. Noble men had suffered, and even died, for their friends, for their fatherland, but JESUS died for His enemies, and for all the world, and bade His disciples follow His example ; and in every age since, men have done it. " Love your friends, hate your enemies," was the old-world maxim, the motto of half-civilised human nature. But JESUS said, "'Who are My enemies ?' I know of none ; all mankind are My friends. Some are ignorant, some are mistaken, some take part against Me, but they know not what they do ; they have been deceived ; they are My friends for all that. I love them ; I will suffer to bless them ; I will die to save them." And He did it.

It would not have been of much use if He had come into the world and had done nothing but preach the gospel of love. Men were dull of hearing, slow to understand. But when truth and love were presented before men's eyes in human form, when the life of love was lived before them, then they could not but comprehend ; and the world has comprehended it, and taken it as the ideal of Christian civilisation,

and of individual practice. It was this that conquered the world in the first age of Christianity ; and it is this alone that can be relied upon to convert men from sin and animalism still. CHRIST must be seen in men's lives ; CHRIST'S love visible in the sacrifices which it makes. This never fails. In missions at home, and in missions abroad, this is the one secret of success ; the loving Spirit of CHRIST, seen, felt, experienced, through the lives and actions, the characters and the endurance, of His true disciples. It is this that distinguishes Christianity from, and raises it above, all other religious systems. It is the fashion with some writers to compare the great teachers of the world with CHRIST, and some cannot see much difference between Him and Confucius, Buddha, Mahomet, Socrates, Marcus Aurelius, and others. The true test is that of love. Other systems have it not, or they confine its exercise to co-religionists, or to a narrow circle of the illuminated, leaving the rest of the world in darkness without compunction.

It is the want of this principle that ought to teach men the ruinous character of Atheism, and Agnosticism, and Materialism, and Secularism, or whatever else modern antagonism to Christianity is called. It is going back to the principles of the brute creation. It is putting selfishness instead of love as the rule of life. If man is a mere animal, then there is no reason why he should not live like an animal. If there be no right and wrong, no future life ; if happiness is the test of duty ; if pleasure is the only proof of rectitude, then each will do what he likes best, and no one will have a right to complain if he is thrust aside, trampled down, or made miserable. The rule of nature is, that the weakest goes to the wall, and the fittest, *i.e.*, the strongest, survives. Atheism destroys love, and so degrades man, and shuts out all brightness, all joy, all hope, all progress. The great antidote of sin is love of God, Who is

holy, beautiful, true, loving. The soul yearns after GOD as its chief good, and therefore fears, avoids, hates sin, which separates it from GOD. The sweetest joys of life come from love—love of the beautiful, the noble, the lovable, sexual love, filial love, parental love, the love of gratitude, the love of pity ; all true progress comes from love, admiration for something outside self, higher than self, the raising of self to attain it. Love is the most powerful of motives. No cable can draw so forcibly or bind so fast as love can do with only a single thread. Atheists are obliged to live decently at present, but if Christian civilisation were done away, no law but that of selfishness and force would remain, and mankind would relapse into savagery.

As plain men and women, then, who cannot follow subtle reasonings and fine-drawn theories; who have neither time, patience, nor inclination for long discussions and learned investigations, let us put aside other arguments, and rest our case upon this. Can that system be true and good, can it even be expedient, which, if carried out to its logical results, would make man no better than the brutes ?

But let us leave general principles, and come to personal conduct. St. Paul confesses for himself, "If I have no love, I am nothing." The keynote of Christian civilisation and progress is love. The test of true religion in the individual heart is still the same; it is love; it is love of GOD, not fear of hell; it is love of others, not selfishness. Human nature is not destroyed, but raised, sanctified, made like the Divine Nature; for "GOD is love." The good within is developed, till it grows and expands and overpowers the animal and lower instincts and rules them, just as civilised man rules fire and water and the powers of nature, and uses them as his servants and instruments to carry out his plans and do his will. The most saintly Christian is the man

who has learned to love most. The faults that any one of us has, come from want of love, or from weak love. We are below the Christian standard. There is human nature with its faults and failings unsubdued. We are in the lower condition of mankind, Christians in name and calling, but never having risen to the Christ-like life, of love to GOD and love to men. Our life-work is to cultivate love. The work of the Church is to help us to do this. This is the meaning and object of the coming Season of Lent. This is taught us every time we come to Holy Communion; it is the feast of love; we commemorate the sacrifice of CHRIST, Who gave Himself to die for love of mankind, for love of each one of us. We kneel side by side, young and old, rich and poor, the Queen and the humblest villager, we eat of one bread and drink of the same cup, to show that we are all equal in GOD'S sight, all members of the same family, bound to love and help one another, as brothers and sisters are bound by the law of nature. And this brotherly love leads on to love of GOD. We love our brethren whom we see, and so we grow in love to GOD Whom we cannot see.

The simplest, surest test of true religion is to see how far it has conquered the natural animal selfishness and savagery that is in us, making "the ape and tiger die," and making love to grow in their place. If it be asked what love is, and how it shows itself, St. Paul tells us to-day, and everything that he says shows a direct contrast to natural selfishness. "Love suffereth long, and is kind;" selfishness is impatient with others' faults, and unkind. "Love envieth not;" selfishness grudges what others have, and wants everything for itself. "Love vaunteth not itself;" selfishness loves to talk of self, to boast of self, to praise self. "Love seeketh not her own;" selfishness stands upon its rights, and forgets, or overrides, the rights of others. - "Love thinketh no

evil ;" selfishness teaches people to suspect others, to be quick to see the faults of others, talk of them, magnify them, to imagine bad motives, and to impute them to others with unsparing words that sow mischief broadcast and work untold misery. Oh those dreadful tongues, that will talk so much to please themselves, when love would keep them bridled and silent and harmless ! "Love beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things ;" selfishness does none of these.

We all hate selfishness when we see it in others ; let us learn to hate it in ourselves. Let us get away a little more this Lent from the selfish world, and frequent the company of JESUS CHRIST, the loving, perfect Man, the revelation of GOD. Let us read His words, think over His example, pray the HOLY SPIRIT to bring to our remembrance what He was and is. There is in each one of us some good ; it only needs to be cultivated, brought out, developed. Just as study and schooling will bring out a child's talents and make them grow and expand, so that it can learn more and more, and by-and-by love learning ; just as an apprentice gradually acquires skill by practice, till his hand, that was so awkward at first, seems to work by instinct and do the right thing so easily, as if it never could go wrong, so we may be apt scholars in the school of CHRIST, so we may grow like Him, and the old Adam, the mere human nature, will be subdued and transformed into a higher, nobler, sweeter life.

It is not at all wonderful that people are such poor Christians, that natural frailties and faults and infirmities go on year after year, and are never overcome. What do they ever do, what time do they spend, what trouble do they give themselves, to conquer these things, to acquire higher qualities ? They give so many hours for so many years to learn a language or to play on an instrument ; they take

pains to learn a business, or to acquire some knowledge that will get them a living ; they do not grudge time or money or trouble for this object or for that, but what does their religion cost them ? What pains have they ever taken to make themselves better Christians ? How many hours, how much labour and self-sacrifice, do they bestow in any week or in any year ? How much have they given in their whole lives to the important work of learning their religion, overcoming their besetting faults, perfecting themselves in the knowledge and the love of GOD ?

Last year most of us spent nearly a third of our time, some seventeen whole weeks, in bed, sleeping, unconscious, doing nothing. We spent at least a whole month in eating and drinking ; at least a fortnight in dressing and undressing. Did we spend as long a time in prayer, in worship, in spiritual cultivation, in preparation for our eternal life beyond the grave ? These are plain questions, and if we will put them to ourselves this Lent, and turn over a new leaf, and be a little more in earnest ; if we will take the guidance of the Church, and dedicate the time we have given to pleasure, or to mere idleness, to prayer and worship, and learning more of CHRIST, and more of ourselves ; if we will take GOD at His word, and put ourselves in the way of the stream of His gifts and blessings, then be sure He will teach us something this Lent ; He will give us something that we need. And although we cannot expect, in so short a time, to be made Saints, like St. Paul, still we shall have taken one step onward and upward ; we shall have done something towards gaining a little of that divine Love, without which, St. Paul tells us, we are nothing.

First Sunday in Lent.

SIN A MADNESS OF THE SOUL.

AMONG our LORD'S miracles there are none more striking than those which relate how "He cast out devils." Modern sceptical criticism has endeavoured to prove that the demoniacs were merely madmen, and that our LORD stooped to the level of the superstitions and ignorant opinions of His people and His day, and treated persons affected with mental disorder, as popular belief regarded them, as if they were possessed of evil spirits. But there is not a little to be said against this. It was not the Jews only who believed in the exercise of diabolical power over men. We who live in Christian lands, where the power of evil is restrained by the presence of the HOLY SPIRIT of GOD ; where souls are dedicated to GOD, and made temples of the HOLY GHOST from childhood ; where the Cross still gleams upon the forehead of those who were once for all adopted as the children of GOD, of whom St. John says, "Him that is born of GOD the wicked one toucheth not ;" where centuries of Christian civilisation have left their mark, and given a tone to everything, we can scarcely imagine what the world was before CHRIST became Man, and what liberty there was for evil ones to do their will.

Satan calls himself, and is called, "The Prince of this world ;" and these remarkable words must have a meaning. A world that rejected GOD, and obeyed Satan, may well have fallen largely under his dominion. The cases of demoniacal possession mentioned in the Gospels almost all occur among the half-heathen population of Galilee, not in Judea,

where GOD was known and worshipped. Probably much of the worship of heathen countries was, as St. Paul called it, a "worship of devils;" probably too much of the mystery and marvel that gathered about the gods was not altogether imposture; but there is reason to believe that supernatural events did actually occur, and that superhuman influences were really exerted. Pharaoh's magicians, we are told, were able to imitate the miracles of Moses; and Christian writers, who lived before idolatry and heathenism were forgotten, do not scruple to ascribe mighty and mysterious powers to the beings with whom intercourse was held. Thus, when Julian tried to restore idolatry, he found the oracle of Apollo near Antioch had ceased to make replies. After many prayers and sacrifices, an answer came, but to the effect that the church built near, with the bodies of martyrs preserved in it, rendered him dumb. So the girl that followed St. Paul jeering at Philippi, and who was kept by her masters to give supernatural information by soothsaying, was not treated by the apostles as an impostor, but as one actually possessed by a spirit. So with the vagabond exorcists at Ephesus; so with magical rites and wonders; they were often real, and the work of evil spirits, who by their superior knowledge of the occult powers of the universe could effect what was impossible to ordinary men, and would so secure for themselves worship and obedience.

The word "demon" means one endued with especial knowledge, and there seems reason to believe that beings endowed with powerful intellects, having a clear insight into the secrets of nature unknown to us, may in spiritual form swarm around us, and be capable of influencing us in many ways; and that we are in the midst of a conflict between good and evil, that is far wider than this little globe, and extends over time that we can scarcely imagine.



In our LORD'S day there seems to have been a culmination in the power of evil in the world, and it was fitting that He should display His authority, by not merely ruling the powers of nature, but by open conflict with and victory over the evil ones who meddle with men and their destinies. The primitive Church fully believed in demoniacal influence, and set apart a special order of men as "exorcists," to heal those who were affected by it; perhaps showing contempt for evil spirits, by appointing mere novices in the Christian ministry to deal with them.

Among heathen nations there is still a deep belief in the existence of evil spirits, and in their will and power to inflict injury upon man; and learned and observant travellers relate remarkable instances of events inexplicable by ordinary causes. Nor do some, whose opinion demands attention, hesitate to say that even in our own country there may probably be cases still that are similar to those recorded in the Gospels, and that if one gifted with the primitive power of discerning spirits could enter our asylums, they would discover some unhappy ones whose condition could only be explained by supposing that they were under the influence of some power outside themselves. Just as in the cases described by the Evangelists, so in these, there is a double consciousness, a sense that some other will is handling the mental and bodily powers, and uttering words and causing acts which the human being can look upon from without, as not really his own. At one moment, the man bewails his misery; at another, his lips speak what he has no power to originate, nor to withhold; and his muscles act with furious violence, beyond their own capacities, and often to the injury of himself. The symptoms of *Delirium Tremens*, in its worst forms, remind us very much of what is related of the demoniacs of the Gospels. Indeed, sensuality was always deemed one of the most common causes

of possession. Sensuality, in any of its forms, acts upon the nervous system fatally, and predisposes the man to spiritual degeneracy. "Unclean spirits" are often spoken of as taking possession of human beings, and it seems likely that their presence had been courted by indulgence in impurity, which has a specially debasing effect upon the soul. Baptism, and the other holy ordinances of the Church, have ever been esteemed as preservatives against the special attacks of evil spirits; but, alas! through modern carelessness and neglect, many persons have never been baptized or confirmed, or have never received the Holy Communion, and so in a Christian country they are in the position of heathens, and are, like them, exposed to the unrestrained influences of malignant demons.

Sadducean scepticism may make light of these things; Materialism may demand to see what our faculties have no power to discern; Rationalism may argue against the possibility of what is related, or against the value of the evidence; but the fact remains that mankind, in all ages and in all countries, have by long experience firmly held belief in the existence of spiritual powers, and in their ability to act upon ourselves. And for Christians there is the undoubted testimony of Scripture, and the words and actions of Him Who cannot lie. The Temptation, which the Church brings before us to-day, was doubtless a real conflict with the mightiest of the spirits of evil, and not a mere subjective incident, and was part of the great work of Him Who was "manifested that He might destroy the works of the devil." Our LORD, in His commission to His Apostles, gave them authority and power to "cast out devils." St. Paul says distinctly that we have to meet, resist, and conquer "principalities and powers" of the air, and to wrestle with spiritual beings that have not flesh and blood.

The Church assumes the truth of these facts, when at baptism she requires a special renunciation of the Evil One, and reminds Christians that they must expect a life-long conflict with Satan; and since he is not omnipresent, this implies that there are many tempters who do his work, and watch around Christian souls, to lead them from good to evil. It is vain to attempt to explain all this. It is foolish to inveigh against it, among many reasons, notably for this, that our very limited knowledge of the ways of GOD'S providence, our ignorance of His eternal plans, our inability to see more than the present moment and a small portion of the history of this little world, which is but so insignificant a part of the creation, makes us quite unfit to form any sort of judgment of the designs and Will of GOD, of the mysterious conflict between good and evil, and of the infinite issues that are being worked out, in the course of ages of time, that stretch in bewildering vistas before and after our brief life, and even the whole history of mankind, and the life of the world itself.

Let us turn, then, to the practical aspect of the question, as that which really most concerns us. There are several instances related by the Evangelists of the cure of demoniacs by our LORD; and it is in the incidents of these cases that our spiritual instruction must be found.

The most remarkable of these cases is that of the possessed at Gadara. We are told of this man, that he had his dwelling among the tombs, and that he was exceeding fierce, so that no man might pass by that way. A modern traveller in Palestine mentions a similar instance, and that he was attacked by a maniac, who lurked among the caverns in the rocks that were used as burial-places.

Those who are under the power of Satan are bent on mischief and destruction. Wicked men are never satisfied, unless they are making others like them-

selves, destroying the fair works of GOD, and spoiling what is beautiful and precious. Order and progress are GOD'S will; and man at his best follows the same rule, but at his worst, influenced by evil spirits, he wars upon all established organisations and upon his fellow-men. Satan and his host have no injuries to avenge, and yet they hurt and destroy wherever they can. Does it not seem as if their influence was at work in these days, when men can be found to spend money, time, and ingenuity for the purpose of scattering death and injury, and wrecking property, without any grudge against their victims, but animated by a dreadful determination to injure and destroy some one, they care not whom?

The demons make use of the man's voice to cry, "What have we to do with Thee, JESUS, Thou Son of GOD?" There are many unknown powers in our nature which can be exercised under certain conditions. Men with strong will, can and do paralyse the will of others, and make them do and say just what they like. Such things are often done in public; and whatever else may be said of them, they show that what we read in the Gospel is not impossible, and that powerful spirits may possess and command the faculties of the unhappy beings whom they haunt.

This evil one using his victim's voice cries out in terror and helpless rage against CHRIST, Whom he recognises at once as the Son of GOD. Just as at the beginning light and darkness were separated, so were good and evil separated; evil hates good, is uneasy in its presence, and fears its own doom.

Now let us notice CHRIST'S method of cure. He disregards the demon's words, and addresses Himself to the man, and asks him his name. The man had lost his own identity by the power of the possessing spirit; our LORD recalls his mind by His question. It has been often noticed that, in a diseased condition, calling a person by name has a rousing effect. For

instance, in somnambulism, swoon, states of terror, or unconsciousness. But the demon still will not allow the man to speak for himself; he replies again, and mockingly cries that his name is "Legion;" as if he would say, that just as the invincible phalanx of the Roman Legion carried all before it, so he had conquered that little world, and made the whole man his slave. And then with one word our LORD expels the mighty spirit; He, stronger than the strong. And presently the man is sitting at the feet of JESUS, clothed and in his right mind.

In the other instance there are similar circumstances. The possessed cries out, "What have I to do with Thee?" and declares that it knows Him to be the Holy One of GOD. And then the power and malice of the spirit is seen in the fact that, though it is forced to obey our LORD'S command, it inflicts one last and parting injury upon its victim, so that he is believed to be dead.

There is much to learn from all this; but we must summarise it in fewest words. We see the power of evil spirits over us. That power, as we have said, is much curtailed by sacraments and the sweet influences of the Cross; but the evil ones are not far off, and if invited by man's will, and if there is a field prepared for them by sinful indulgence, and a door opened and kept open by free choice of things evil, then, if there be not actual possession, there will be diabolical temptation, and the man will become the slave of those special sins which have ever been attributed to evil spirits.

We have three enemies, "the World," that is, evil men, evil example, the influences of human passions and temptations that belong to this life and its concerns; "the Flesh," that is, the natural bent of our passions and impulses that clamour for gratification; and "the Devil," that is, spiritual temptations, especially Pride, Rebellion, Envy, Lying,

Malice, and such like. We say of the actions that come of these, that they are "devilish." We see men and women, who seem to have lost the human character, and have become something that reminds us of the wild beast, but which has a still more terrible aspect, that seems to tell of an origin more evil than anything in this world. Like the demoniac, they have come to desperate condition; beyond human control, "No man can bind them;" beyond human influence and restoration, "No man can tame them." There is a sense of utter misery and despair, often, as in the case of Judas, ending in suicide; according to the old Latin saying, "Those whom the gods destine for destruction, they first lead on to madness." We read of such persons, as, for instance, some of the later Roman Emperors; men and women whom revolutions and times of terror have thrown upon the surface, criminals in modern times, the awful spawn of degraded humanity, in its last forms and developments of evil.

We may see, in the Gospel record of possession, that characteristic of evil which begins to work long before the lowest depth is reached. "What have I to do with Thee?"—horror, hatred of GOD, fear of His punishing hand. It has not reached its worst form in many, but for all that it is there; just as a disease may be discerned by a clever physician or surgeon, by subdued and premonitory symptoms, that are not noticed by ordinary observers. Keeping away from Holy Communion is such a symptom; dislike of Church services and holy seasons; inability to pray; indulgence in those special sins which we have said are diabolical in their nature; evil thoughts cherished and delighted in,—these tell a tale of a soul separated and separating itself from GOD, willingly prone to evil, likely to fall more and more under its influence.

And how hard is it for such an evil-ridden soul

to be turned to GOD ! And yet these mighty acts of our LORD teach us that, by GOD'S mercy, it may be so called back and brought to know itself, and to be made free from its cruel master. The voice of CHRIST is heard calling the sinner by name, reminding him of his baptismal calling, appealing to his Christian manhood, to free himself from degradation, slavery, and misery. The voice comes sometimes by Christian ministers, often by conscience, sometimes by some chance word or thought ; and when the man is willing, his Deliverer is at hand, and presently he sits clothed and in his right mind at his Saviour's feet, willing to follow Him whithersoever He goes.

We have been thinking of great sins and sinners, but let none of us put aside these thoughts, as if they did not concern us. The temptations of evil spirits come to every one of us. The sins that are specially diabolical, at least in their less gross and violent forms, are daily in our way ; and while we yield to them, we are not in our right mind ; we are transferring our soul's allegiance to the enemy of GOD and man, and are bringing sorrow upon ourselves, and the shadow of death, having our dwelling among the tombs and with the dead, wounding ourselves, and likely to injure others.

We are not yet so far gone that we cannot use our own faculties ; we can still see our fall, still long for restoration, still come to CHRIST the Restorer, still pray Him to pity and help us. This, then, let us do ; this Lent, nay, each day, before we sleep, each Sunday as we pass from out of the world within the church-door, each time we kneel humbly at the LORD'S Table, each time we join in the Litany, and say, " From all blindness of heart, from pride, vainglory, and hypocrisy, from envy, hatred, and malice, and from the crafts and assaults of the devil, Good LORD deliver us ; " so shall we ever keep near to our LORD, and that wicked one shall not touch us, for if we resist the devil he will flee from us.

Second Sunday in Lent.

SIN A LEPROSY OF THE SOUL.

LAST Sunday we considered Sin and its pardon, as exemplified in our LORD'S miraculous healing of those possessed with devils. Let us to-day look at the nature of Sin, and the means and method of its pardon, from another standpoint, as they seem to be set before us in the miraculous healing of Leprosy.

If we have realised what our LORD was, we shall be prepared to believe that His revelation of Himself, and of the FATHER by Him, was not confined to His spoken words. He says Himself that His acts were an integral portion of His mission. So when He had healed the ten lepers, He sent them to the priests, as He said, "for a testimony unto them." The ancient ritual had been handed down for the restoration of the leper to the rights of citizenship and of the Temple, but no one had used them. For when had a leper been healed? But now there come ten men, known and proved to have been lepers for years, now known and proved to have been freed from the incurable disease by JESUS. Similar miracles occurred many times. Therefore, when John sent his disciples to our LORD, to ask Him whether He were the CHRIST, He bade them go and tell John what they had seen Him do; and among these deeds He specially mentioned the cleansing of lepers. For, as the king of Israel said to Naaman, it was an accepted belief that GOD alone could cure

a leper. Were not the priests, the scribes, the lawyers, bound to inquire whether this were not the Prophet like unto Moses, the promised Healer, proving His commission by His more than human power? But they understood not. Let us be wiser, and learn something from our LORD'S acts, which were revelations, His mighty works, which were parables, full of instruction for all time and for all men.

We can hardly read what is laid down in Leviticus, respecting Leprosy, without seeing that there was in the mind of GOD something special and significant in its nature. It seems to have been selected by GOD as a type of Sin. The leper was looked upon as one specially chosen by GOD for unusual suffering. Some learned Jews declared that MESSIAH would be a leper, because of the peculiar phrase in Isaiah, where He is said to be "stricken, smitten of GOD, and afflicted." The leper was to be treated as one already dead. His clothing was that of a dead body; he went about in perpetual mourning attire, celebrating, lamenting his own death. Any one who touched him was rendered unclean, in exactly the same way as if he had touched a corpse. The leper was excluded from the company, not only of his relations, but of all living men. All that belonged to him passed to his heirs, as if he were dead and buried.

Now, this was evidently not because the disease was infectious, or more deadly than many others. Among other nations the leper lived with his family, and even held offices of importance, and transacted business, like any one else. So Naaman was the general of the Syrian army, and had his house and servants. It was only by the Levitical law that leprosy was specially fenced about with peculiar restrictions and disabilities. The disease itself had many phases. Sometimes it exhibited itself in a spot or deep-seated sore; sometimes it covered the whole body with an affection of the skin so that the

leper was "as white as snow;" sometimes the feet and legs were affected with fearful enlargement called "elephantiasis;" sometimes the flesh and bones were consumed by a cancerous corruption, so that parts of the body died, and dropped off. There were, indeed, appointed rites for the restoration of the healed leper to his civil and religious rights, but the disease was universally considered incurable. Perhaps these rites were ordained by GOD for no other purpose than to draw attention to the work of MESSIAH, when He came, doing deeds that no man had ever done before.

The disease has its origin in hot and dry climates. Probably the Israelites were first afflicted with it in Egypt. The forced labour, under the hot sun, in the dry and dusty soil, with hard fare and cruel usage, was likely to create an enfeebled condition of body, and so induce such a malady. Indeed, the Egyptians, in some of their records, after the Exodus, endeavoured to give that event an entirely different aspect, by saying that they had driven out the Israelites from their country, in disgust because they were a people hopelessly infected with leprosy !

The close intercourse that was established with the East by the Crusades, caused leprosy to be introduced into Europe, and in most towns of any importance there was a lepers' hospital. The mediæval Church followed the practice of the Mosaic Law, and treated leprosy as a disease different from all others. The leper was clothed in a shroud, like a corpse, and when he was admitted into the lazarus-house, the Mass of the dead was celebrated over him. The tenderness of the Church regarded the leper with special pity. Like the Israelite, it esteemed him as selected by GOD for a painful life, separated from its joys and brightness, and therefore deserving more than ordinary love and compassion, in company with the mentally imbecile, and other unfortunates. There are some very touch-

ing legends, in which loving service to such unhappy sufferers was shown to be accepted by our LORD as if rendered to Himself.

Now, we know that all the rites and ordinances of the Mosaic Law were symbolical, and that what is written is for our learning. By the Law is the knowledge of sin ; it is the servant to lead us to the Teacher of truth. The sacrifices point to CHRIST with one hand, and to man's sins, that need pardon, with the other. So yet more mysteriously the rites that clustered round the leper symbolised the work of CHRIST, and were never understood fully till He came, and by His word or His touch cleansed, and in a moment restored to health, the doomed and hopelessly dis-eased leper. Sin clung to man. It lay deep within his nature, out of the reach of all human skill. The better sort of men groaned under its presence, longing for release, trying this remedy and that, in vain. All over the world, and in every age, when men think, and know themselves, when they yearn after purity and spiritual progress, they find their way barred by inward defilement. "When I would do good, evil is present with me. Oh ! wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from this body of death ?" Adam was warned by GOD that if he fell into sin, in that day he should die. Satan told him that it would not be so. Adam sinned, and did not literally die. Satan seemed true, and GOD a liar. But Satan knew that he was playing with words, and deceiving. Adam lived on, but his soul was dead ; just as the leper lived on in the world for years, and yet was accounted dead by the people of GOD, according to GOD'S own ordinance. So in the sight of GOD, and His Church and people, and the holy angels, the impenitent and unpardoned sinner now is dead while he liveth. The old lie is still uttered, still believed. Men and women revel and wallow in sin, and they say, "We are none the worse, but a great deal the

better, and happier, and richer for it." There is a vulgar phrase, used by those who lead the pure to evil; they bid them come with them and "see life." This is the tempter's lie. The truth is, they go down to death. Sin is like leprosy; its inevitable end is death. The leper died, as it were, once, when the disease came upon him; he died, as it were, a second time, when he gave up the ghost; which was from the first the certain result of his leprosy. So we are taught by GOD that there are two deaths for the sinful soul; the first death is here, when sin has taken its hold; the second death is when sin and death are hurled to their doom. The leper still lived in the world, saw the sun, ate and drank and slept, as other men; but GOD'S Law counted him dead. So there are men and women living, working, smiling, prospering, like Naaman; great, favoured, honoured; only GOD esteems them dead. O strange and sad contrast! These lepers, one and all, knew their sickness, their misery, the inevitable doom of their disease, and when they saw the Saviour, they believed in His power and mercy, and called aloud, begging Him to heal them; but sinful souls fear not, pray not, care not to be cleansed, even when cure is offered to them. All men are sinners; but some are pardoned, and some are not pardoned, because they do not wish it. And when the body is stripped off, and we shall know even as GOD knows, all will see that they are, like the blighted Assyrian host, "all dead corpses" in the morning of light and life and resurrection.

Do we ask, "How is this?" It is so by necessity. Sin is a disease that is incurable by man. Sin is a debt that no man can pay. Sin is a disorder in the cosmos of law. Sin is a flaw in the perfection of GOD'S works. Sin is rebellion against the will of Him Who must be supreme. Sin is death in the kingdom of life. Sin is darkness in the realm of light. It is a contradiction, an impossibility. It

cannot be tolerated by the perfect and all-holy GOD. It will flee from Him, and He must drive it from His presence. By unalterable laws, GOD and sin are incompatible. GOD cannot change; therefore sin must be infinitely separated from Him. There is a very close analogy between the body, and the soul; that which disease is to the body, sin is to the soul. "GOD is not the GOD of the dead, but of the living." All this, and more, is taught by the words and the works of CHRIST.

But we must keep ourselves just now to the analogies of leprosy. Leprosy came on gradually; so no one is a great sinner all at once. If a man touched a leper he partook of his defilement, and though he did not catch the disease, he lost his religious privileges and needed reconciliation by the appointed rites. And who does not know the defiling power of sin and sinners? The very knowledge of sin is debasing. Example, even familiarity with evil, is dangerous to purity and innocence: "With the forward, thou shalt learn frowardness."

There were many varieties in the symptoms of leprosy. All lepers did not look the same. Yet there was one law of GOD for all. So sinners vary in the nature of their sins and in their guilt; yet GOD counts all sinners, and the penalty of sin is upon all. All lepers were shut out from Jerusalem; and into the heavenly Jerusalem there can enter nothing that is defiled.

But let us hasten to happier thoughts. The healing of leprosy by CHRIST tells of the pardon of sin, by Him Who alone can do both. There are only two instances of the cleansing of lepers given at length and in detail, and their circumstances are significant, and full of meaning.

The ten lepers were healed mysteriously. They were bidden, sick unto death as they were, to go and show themselves to the priests, to receive a certificate

of health. They obeyed the seemingly unreasonable command, and "as they went they were cleansed." It was not their going that healed them; yet if they had not gone they would not have been made well. So Naaman washed in Jordan, and his flesh came again as the flesh of a little child; but the water of Jordan had no more healing in it than had the waters of Abana and Pharpar. What, then, healed these lepers? It was obedience; doing what they were told; putting themselves in the way of GOD'S power; fulfilling the conditions laid down for fitting themselves to receive GOD'S gift; accepting GOD'S way, though they could not understand it.

We must do the same. There is no other name whereby we must be saved but the name of JESUS. There is salvation by no other. We cannot save ourselves; yet He will not save us against our will, without our co-operation. What we have to do is very little, but that little must be done. His way may seem unlikely; His Sacraments may be argued against; His Church may be found fault with; and men may set up what they call purer, more reasonable, more intelligible systems. But it is perilous for man to take his own way, instead of GOD'S way. It has never answered; it cannot possibly succeed. If we want to be cleansed from the leprosy of sin, we must do exactly what GOD has told us; nothing else will do.

Now let us take the other case, and we learn something more. Our LORD healed this man by His touch. If JESUS had been only a man, His touch would not have done the leper any good, and it would have made Himself unclean. But virtue went out of Him, and chased away the evil humours, and made the sufferer well. In like manner, what was the Incarnation but the Divine touch healing humanity? Our LORD joined Himself to our nature, and was not defiled, but Himself sanctified us. And now, to

the end, He is with us in His Church and Sacra-
ments. He touches us by them, and we are healed.
He has now ascended, and may be touched every-
where, by all, spiritually and effectively. Greater
things than He did are done, as He promised. His
power is present to heal in those whom He sends in
His name; in ordinances, that He has appointed;
in lifeless means, that He has blessed and made
life-giving.

There is but one point more to notice; but there
is in it much consolation for us all. The demoniac
was too far gone even to think of cure. The leper
felt his misery, and cried aloud with wondrous faith,
and asked our LORD for healing. The ten stood afar
off, huddled together, Jews and Samaritans, forgetting
their differences in their common misery, and cried
piteously for mercy. The single leper worshipped
and believed, saying, "LORD, if Thou wilt, Thou
canst make me clean." Let us do likewise. We know
our sinfulness; we know our danger; we know our
Saviour. Down on our knees, then, let us call upon
Him for pardon, and to us He will surely say, "I will;
be thou clean." Some may seem better, some worse,
but for all alike there is the same Saviour. There
is but one way of salvation. Young and old, rich
and poor, gentle and simple, saint and sinner, the
transgressor of one commandment, typified perhaps
by the single leper, the grievous sinner who has
broken every law of GOD and man, shadowed out
perhaps by the throng of ten; all alike must come
to CHRIST, for in Him alone is hope for all and
for each.

Not once, nor twice, but day by day, as long as
we live, we must cry, "JESUS, Master, have mercy
upon us." Specially, at seasons like this, our LORD'S
hand seems to be stretched out to us, and His voice
is heard offering cleansing, not even waiting for our
agonising cry. And when at last we come to die,

when death is doing its worst, and all is ruin, still faith will teach us to lift up our voice, inarticulate indeed, and unheard by human ears, but heard by Him, heard and answered: "JESU, JESU, mercy." And then, when all seems wrecked by sin's curse, then, by His touch, we shall be made whole, and enter into life.

Third Sunday in Lent.

SIN, THE BLINDNESS OF THE SOUL.

AMONG the miracles of our LORD, the most numerous are those of giving sight to the blind. This is just what any one well acquainted with the East would have considered probable; for blindness is far more common in Oriental countries than it is here. The heat and glare of the sun, the dust, the multitudes of flies, the practice of sleeping in the open air, and some other peculiarities of Eastern life make diseases of the eyes the most common of all bodily ailments. It is said that in Cairo one person out of every five of the population is blind, besides those who are affected with ophthalmia and other complaints which often end in blindness. It is probable, therefore, that our LORD constantly met with blind persons, and it is recorded that He healed many; and there are four cases the particulars of which have been handed down to us by the Evangelists. Medical and surgical knowledge and skill were not great in those old-world days, and blindness was usually as incurable as leprosy; and therefore when our LORD sent back the Baptist's disciples to their master, He asserted His claims to be the CHRIST, not only by His power to cure leprosy, but by His giving sight to the blind. He was fulfilling the prophet's foretold attributes of MESSIAH; and so, in the synagogue at Nazareth, He first announced His mission by reading the place where it was written in Isaiah that He was anointed

by the Spirit of GOD, among other purposes, "to give recovery of sight to the blind." And when one of the men whom He restored was arguing with the Pharisees, he justly said, that since the world began no one had heard of the opening of the eyes of one who had been born blind. The learned and devout among the Jews, therefore, were bound to inquire into the pretensions of this Prophet, who cleansed the lepers and opened the eyes of the blind. But prejudice, and preconceived theories, and narrow, petty sectarian trivialities misled them; so that, with an astounding and undoubted miracle before their eyes, they missed all its importance, and wandered into misapprehensions, because its Author violated some of their traditional and utterly unauthorised superstitions respecting the Sabbath.

We sometimes crave for miracles; let us learn from this that miracles will not compel men to believe; for seeing is not always believing. Our LORD'S works, like His words, had different effects upon those who saw them; just as the seed fell on different kinds of ground, and sometimes bore more or less fruit, and sometimes perished. Well may our LORD have turned upon the Pharisees and charged them with blindness; blindness worse than that which He had just removed; blindness that affected, not the bodily organs, but spiritual blindness, harder to cure than that of one whose eyes had never seen; blindness which resisted even His power and His love.

For, like leprosy, blindness was a type of sin. The blind were excluded, not only from the priesthood, but even from the Temple services. The old prophets constantly used the simile, and said that their people were blind, unable to see what was plain enough to some. Abraham could see the coming CHRIST, and the city that had foundations, which GOD had built. The spiritually enlightened could

see CHRIST in the offerings of the Law ; could understand the folly and wickedness of idolatry, and the certain doom of rebellion and disobedience to the declared will of GOD ; and could lament that many of their nation were more stupid than ox and ass, for these animals knew their master and their stable, while GOD'S own chosen people could not discern His Hand, nor walk in His way, nor keep themselves safe and happy in His appointed home. So St. Paul, when he could not persuade his countrymen to accept CHRIST as the MESSIAH of the Law and the Prophets, can only explain their conduct by saying that blindness had come upon their souls ; and then he extends his lamentation, and bewails Christian blindness in words and terms that apply to us, if we have not the eyes of the soul enlightened.

Let us, then, take once more the circumstances of the recorded miracles of our LORD, and see to-day how they preach to us that sin is a blindness of the soul, and how CHRIST alone can restore our spiritual sight. As we have already seen, the incidents of each miracle teach some special lesson, and what does not apply to one person is exactly appropriate to another. So still the HOLY SPIRIT of GOD speaks by human lips that every soul may hear something suitable for itself; and, like the manifold audience at Pentecost, each may receive in language that he can understand the word of light and life.

In the first miracle, two blind men follow JESUS, apparently asking in vain for His help, but undaunted by His silence or refusal. They follow Him into His own house at Capernaum. Then He asks them whether they believe in His power to do this work of GOD, and when they say they do, He touches their eyes, saying, "According to your faith, be it unto you," and immediately their sight was restored. Here, as in the case of the lepers, there is a sense

of want, a longing for, and a labouring after, the desired boon :—

“ Scarce half I seem to live ; dead more than half.
O dark, dark, dark, amid the blaze of noon,
Irrevocably dark, total eclipse,
Without all hope of day !”

Have we this sense of blindness ? Do we feel that we are deficient in spiritual light ; that we are not perfect men ; that others have faculties that we have not ? Do we want to be better ? Do we seek to be made better, to see our faults more clearly, to discern the beauty of holiness, the unreality of things of time and sense, the sinfulness and the misery of sin ? Do we long for the power, which others possess, of seeing by faith, of realising the spiritual ? Or are we satisfied with ourselves and our condition, and while we are eager enough after the things of this life, we do not covet earnestly any one spiritual gift ?

These men persevered, in spite of discouragement and neglect ; and not getting what they sought, they boldly followed JESUS into His house, and thus at last gained their quest. In those days our LORD had but one house, in one obscure town in a corner of the world. Now His houses are numberless ; and in Christian lands they are not far from any man's door. Our LORD still meets petitioners in His house ; still hears, and heals ; still gives sight to the blind, by His word and His touch ; still specially works on the Sabbath, or rather the Lord's Day, so much better than the old Sabbath, which has passed away. If we are in earnest, we shall be frequent visitors to the house of GOD ; listening, communicating, believing that He is able to do what we want Him to do for us.

Next let us notice that miracle recorded by St. John at such length, by which the man born blind received sight. This was no blindness from accident or disease. The man had never seen. There was

organic fault from birth. This man was made to see by washing in Siloam. We cannot fail to perceive at once a parable here of the washing away of original or birth sin by holy Baptism. This man is not said to have asked CHRIST'S aid ; it was given, before it was asked for. So our LORD will have little children brought to Him, before they know their need of a Saviour, and by Baptism be made partakers of an unasked blessing.

But there is other teaching also in what our LORD did. Just as in His cleansing of the lepers He used unlikely means, He spat on the ground, and made clay of the spittle, and anointed the eyes of the blind man with the clay, and said unto him, "Go wash in the pool of Siloam, which is, by interpretation, Sent ; he went his way therefore, and washed, and came seeing." What was said last Sunday of GOD'S choice of unlikely instruments and methods, in His providential ordering of Church ordinances and means of grace, is again taught here. If we feel our blindness, and desire its cure, we shall use our other senses to help us, just as the blind man could hear what our LORD said, and holding some one else's hand, could use his feet to walk to the pool of Siloam. The man was more humble than Naaman ; he went straight to the place of which he was told, and washed, as he was told. So let us be obedient to GOD'S commands, and go His way ; for there is none other way given among men whereby we can be saved. Siloam means "Sent;" the same as Shiloh, that is, CHRIST ; for He is the Water of Life. Nor is this all ; He said of His apostles, "As My Father has sent Me, even so send I you." The word "apostle" also means "sent;" "He that heareth you, heareth Me ; and lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world."

There is still the pool of Siloam, then ; still Shiloh ; still CHRIST ; still the fountain open for sin

and uncleanness; still those whom CHRIST has sent in His name to give sight to the blind. Some run who are not sent; but the Church knows that she has received authority from her LORD, and she will act in His name and by His authority, till He comes again.

But let us not fail to notice the after-incident in this miracle. The man was sent for by the Pharisees, perhaps by the Sanhedrim themselves. His cure was thoroughly investigated. It is the only instance recorded of one of our LORD'S miracles being judicially and critically examined by competent and unfavourable authorities. The miracle cannot be denied, but the subject of it is abused, and cast out of the Jewish Church. Then our LORD goes and seeks him, and tells him, in so many words, plainly and categorically, that He is the CHRIST. So is it still. The baptized Christian is CHRIST'S special care. He manifests Himself to him, leading him on by Confirmation and frequent Communion to a knowledge of Himself. His eyes, which He has opened, are used to see the face of his Saviour. He believes, worships, and is taught, and blessed. The world rejects him, but CHRIST accepts him, and he wants no other friend.

In the next miracle there are again some special incidents that are most instructive. St. Mark tells us that at Bethsaida a blind man was brought by others to our LORD. There are some who are sinful and impenitent, who will nevertheless not seek pardon. They must be brought to their Saviour by the intercession of others.

Then we are told that JESUS led the man out of the town. Bethsaida was one of the cities upon which our LORD pronounced a woe, because it believed not, though many of His mighty works were done in her. So GOD, in His mercy, sometimes takes men away from companions, from business,

from distracting and debasing influences, and then converts them. The loneliness of sickness, or trouble, or poverty, or unjust suspicion, or calumny, may sometimes do this. What a comforting picture for such an afflicted one, to see himself, as the blind man led by His Saviour's hand out of the crowd, into the quiet country-side, where alone with his LORD he may be healed !

Nor is this all. This man, alone of all the subjects of CHRIST'S miracles, was restored gradually. At first he saw imperfectly, men and trees much the same ; then at last everything clearly. There is much comfort for some of us here. We can see a little, but nothing is clear. We have perplexities ; nothing is quite certain to us, either about ourselves, or our duty, or our creed. We are not quite blind, but neither are we perfect in our sight ; just as some are colour-blind, some short-sighted, and so on. We need not despair, then, but hope that He, Who hath begun the good work, will carry it on, and perfect it ; and that if we see now darkly, if much that we see is but a riddle that we cannot understand, that we shall one day see face to face, and that, like this restored blind man, the first face we see clearly will be the Face of our Saviour. For, like Elijah's servant on Carmel, we may look six times and see nothing, but the seventh time will reveal all we long for.

And now let us try and learn something from the fourth and last miracle, the case of Bartimæus at Jericho. Jericho was a cursed city, a city near which robbers prowled. When Bartimæus had received his sight he left Jericho, and followed JESUS to Jerusalem. Like this, the sinful soul is a citizen of the world that is cursed, but when it is pardoned it becomes the disciple of JESUS, and He leads it on to Jerusalem, the city of peace.

Then notice that this man was not only blind, but

poor; poor because blind; so that he could do nothing but beg. Alas! are not many souls like this? And some, like the Laodicean Church, do not even know their degraded state; they are poor and blind; yet, because the poverty and the blindness are spiritual, they are ignorant of their condition, and regarding the body and this life only, they call themselves rich and happy; and some say, "Are we blind also?" and yet say it in mockery. Just as Judas said, "LORD, is it I that will betray Thee?" and yet even then could not repent and turn from his sin; or as David could not see himself in Nathan's parable; for none are so blind as those who will not see; and those who will not see, presently cannot see; for the god of this world blinds the eyes of his slaves, just as the Philistine lords put out the eyes of Samson. Love blinds; especially self-love. Hate blinds; prejudice blinds; ignorance blinds; pride, party-spirit, custom and fashion, even learning, especially where it is in one branch of study only,—all these, and many more, strangely work, till men cannot see what is plainly before them, and which others see clearly enough at their side. "Faults in the life breed errors in the brain." While the pure in heart see GOD, the fool saith in his heart, "There is no GOD;" for his heart is foul, and darkness reigns there.

But let us be like Bartimæus. He was blind, yet he heard when JESUS was passing. If he could not see, he could hear; if he could not see, he could cry aloud. So let us cry out of the deep, out of our darkness, alone, helpless, with none to lead us. Oh! who is not so sometimes, lonely, friendless, in darkness of soul? What can we do but cry, "Have mercy on me"? Well, this miracle bids us cry, and keep on crying, and promises us an answer of peace. But we shall not find sympathy from many. Those about Bartimæus bade him hold his peace. "Miser-

able comforters are ye all." "A man's foes are they of his own household." Those who would enter into life are hindered often by familiar friends. Let them cry so much the more a great deal, "Thou Son of David, have mercy upon me," for He is the Friend of the friendless. "The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force." It is those who "overcome" who receive the promises; the men who will not be put down; the martyrs, the soldiers, those whose faith removes mountains.

Then JESUS stood still, and called him, and then those who had hindered him encouraged him; for with the world nothing succeeds like success. But oh, how true and wonderful and blessed are those words, spoken by those who understood not what they said: "He calleth thee;" He, the Saviour of the world, the mighty GOD, stands still for thee; He calleth thee! His whole thought is about thee, poor man, beggar, blind; He occupies Himself with thee! His other work waits that He may attend to thee! Is not this the marvellous truth that dawns upon the penitent soul, and draws him in a tumult of wonder, gratitude, and love to his Saviour's feet? "He loved me, and gave Himself for me." See it all pictured in Bartimæus: "He casting away his garment, rose, and came to JESUS." The poor beggar-man flings away his one garment, all he has, reckless, only eager for a far better possession; waiting for no helping, guiding hand, he rushes forward, heedless of imminent stumbling and falls, his ears guiding him, since his eyes cannot, with arms outstretched, with tears streaming down his poor face, and crying still, "Thou Son of David, have mercy on me." Well may our LORD say, "Thy faith hath saved thee." Faith cometh by hearing, not by sight. Faith may be blind, but it leads to JESUS; and He turns faith into sight.

Oh, for faith like that of Bartimæus; grace to cast

away all that would hinder our steps to our LORD'S feet ; grace to forsake all, that we may be His disciples ; grace to fling away the tattered, ragged robe of our own righteousness, and present ourselves, without cloaking our sinfulness, to Him ! Oh for the earnest, eager rush towards Him, disregarding all else, fearing nothing, hindered by no one, not seeing, but "as it were a beast before Thee," guided by an instinct that is not reckoned among the five senses, for it is implanted by God Himself, Who gives the eagle power to find his unseen food, and the dog to track his master by ways that he has never seen, and makes the magnet turn ever to its invisible pole !

Yes, the Christian's daily prayer is, "LORD, that I may receive my sight." "Lighten Thou mine eyes, that I sleep not in death." Light was GOD'S first gift to the world ; light was GOD'S last best gift to the world, JESUS CHRIST. Light is the symbol of conversion in the repentant soul ; light is the emblem of salvation to the glorified soul, as we read in the Epistle to-day, "Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and CHRIST shall give thee light ;" light, more light ; light within ; light at eventide ; light in the dark valley ; light in the land where the Lamb is their everlasting Light. Be this our inheritance, and all our dark days shall be remembered no more.

Fourth Sunday in Lent.

SIN, A PARALYSIS OF THE SOUL.

AS diseases are of many kinds, so are sins. The effects of diseases upon the body are not more varied than are the effects of sin upon the soul. We have tried to learn some spiritual lessons from our LORD'S treatment of mental alienation, leprosy, and blindness; let us now see what is taught us in His miraculous healing of Palsy.

The first case recorded is that which took place at Capernaum. A multitude thronged the house where our LORD was, listening to His teaching. The friends of a poor paralytic carried him to the place, hoping to ask our LORD to heal him; but when they came to the house, they found it so crowded with eager and curious listeners that they could not get in, and the people were either unable or unwilling to make way for them to pass. They would not give up the gratification of hearing the new prophet's words; no, not that a poor disabled fellow-creature might have a chance of health and soundness. The way of the world! the selfishness of human nature! Each was afraid that he would lose his place. Let some one else move; why should he? We know what all this means.

But the poor man had some true friends, if these his neighbours and fellow-townspeople were thus unfriendly. The four who had carried him so far were not daunted by difficulties or stopped by the

first rebuff. "Difficulty," as it has been said, "stupefies the sluggish, advises the prudent, terrifies the fearful, but animates the courageous to greater exertion." The bearers carried the helpless sufferer up the outside staircase common in the East, and removing some of the flat roof, let down the man into the midst of the audience, at the very feet of JESUS.

Let us contemplate him, as he lies there. He scarcely seems to ail anything; there are no hideous symptoms, as in leprosy; his eyes are bright and intelligent, as they are fixed with earnest gaze upon our LORD'S face; his own face is flushed with expectation; he looks well and healthful; yet he lies there, unable to move. His limbs are sound, but their nerves and muscles are powerless to obey his will; he tries to raise his arms, but they lie helpless, like logs of wood, at his side; he would walk; he puts forth the effort, but he is disobeyed by his own limbs; he seems to be two persons rather than one. His body is hardly more his own than that of the possessed. Is not this a true picture of that of which we read elsewhere? The spirit is willing, the flesh is weak. Is it not very much what St. Paul describes, "The good that I would, I do not; but the evil which I would not, that I do. I see a law in my members, warring against the law of my mind. O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from this dead body?" The double consciousness of man has been found out, wherever men have thought and reasoned. Have not we found it out? Have we not wondered sometimes which is the true self, the self that is active, loving, generous, noble, or the self that is slothful, cowardly, mean, grovelling, despicable? What great and heroic actions we were going to do, and there was nothing to hinder us, but some sort of spiritual paralysis was upon us, and we did not stir. Look at that man; talk to him; you are convinced that

he has an immense reserve of latent power. How he could preach ; how he could influence others ; what powers of persuasion he has ; what winning manners ; what Christ-like gifts ! Yet his life is a failure and a disgrace. He fritters away years in trivialities ; he lapses idly into gross indulgences ; he does no good to himself, or to any one else ; and his end is shame and ruin. Sin has paralysed some spiritual function, and spoiled another noble vocation. Those who knew him saw the mischief growing upon him ; he knew it himself, but he never strove against it ; perhaps he excused himself by saying the fault was in his blood ; his father was so before him. It may have been so ; and thus we see the far-reaching evil of a man's sin, that it is visited upon his children ; or the responsibility of those who train the young, if they do not help them in advance to master the sin that easily besets them, before it masters them.

For, notice that it is the work of this man's friends that procures his cure. It was when our LORD saw their faith that He stopped His teaching, and restored the man who had lost all power, perhaps even the energy to make his case known to Him, Who alone could help him. Parents, teachers, friends, are taught here how much they may do for those who are tied and bound with the chain of their sins, hereditary or personal, or both.

Our LORD turns to the man and says, "Be of good cheer ; thy sins are forgiven thee." He was doubtless downcast, and believed that he was suffering the due punishment of his bitterly regretted sins. Perhaps we are to understand that he had already truly repented, and that he had been long since forgiven by GOD ; for the temporal punishment of sin is often continued when the eternal doom is remitted. So it was with David ; with the disobedient prophet ; with the antediluvians, as St. Peter seems to teach ; with Moses ; and many more who, as St. Paul says,

suffer here that their souls may be saved in the great day. Then our LORD gives the man vigour and health, and he goes away, carrying his bed, which hitherto had borne him ; and the crowd that would not make way for him in his misery were courteous enough when he was able to push for himself. The way of the world again !

The next miracle is one of the few related only by St. John, and is full of remarkable details. A man had been paralysed for thirty-eight years, and lay, with many more sick folk, by the pool of Bethesda, friendless, pushed aside by those who had friends ; a whole lifetime of disease, helplessness, and disappointment, settling down into despondency and hopeless endurance. To this man, among the suffering multitude, JESUS comes. This man alone He makes whole. Why did He not with the same word restore every one of those sufferers to health and usefulness ? Because His miracles were part of His teaching. He did not come to upset the course of the world, to remove every trace of evil ; the hour was not come for that. What He did was to manifest His power and His willingness to pardon sin, and to redeem the souls of those who trust in Him. So He says, even to this despairing cripple, "Wilt thou be made whole?" For although we come into being without our will, and go out of the world without our will, we cannot be pardoned and saved without our will. If we will not, GOD cannot. Sometimes the spiritual paralysis affects the understanding and the conscience ; the man does not know his misery ; he goes gaily on, yet is dead while he lives. The outward appearance is not changed ; only his judgment of right and wrong is inactive. He has neither the will nor the power to alter and amend his life.

There are many incidents that are interesting and instructive ; but we must only notice one or two. Jesus does not forget the man. Just as He had

searched out the man to whom He had given sight, so He follows this man, for He had not yet done with him. His case is selected, not for himself, but that by it the whole world may be taught. It was for us, then, for our instruction, that our LORD found that man, in the Temple, a few days after his miraculous restoration to health.

Notice, then, the man was in the Temple, the best and fittest place for one who had been so singularly favoured and had received such a special blessing; and being in the house of GOD, the Son of GOD manifests Himself to him. GOD'S house is the house of GOD'S people. Hezekiah with his enemy's letter; Hannah with her great sorrow and her great want; the publican with his repentance; Simeon and Anna with their patient hope; Mary when she had lost her Divine Son,—all these betook themselves to the Temple, and there they all found relief. And shall we Christians not haunt the house of GOD? And shall those who come in faith fail to find a blessing?

But let us specially notice what our LORD has to say to the man; what He meets him on purpose to say to him, and through him to all the world, and to each soul: "Sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee." "A worse thing;" something worse than thirty-eight years' impotency; a lost, wasted, helpless, useless life; all the bright years of youth and manhood, which others enjoyed, which others spent in active work, in well-paid labour; something worse than this, the result of sin! We know but little of the world to come; scarcely anything of the future of souls, of the effects of sin, of the punishment of disobedient, impenitent sinners. In the present day there is a tendency to water down all terrors; to understate GOD'S judgments; to hope where there seems small ground for hope, in what it has pleased GOD to tell us. There may have been mistakes formerly in the opposite direction, but let us to-day

beware of a reaction equally mischievous. This life shows us every day the terrible, widespread, long-lasting misery that one pleasant, passing sin will bring. Let us ponder our LORD'S words, "A worse thing;" and let us be afraid of running the awful risk that creatures run who defy the laws of the Creator, and put themselves in the path of inevitable, crushing retribution. We have seen, we have felt, the natural consequences of our sins; there is "a worse thing" yet, a longer period of consequences, a paralysis that will hold us down, as in chains, while happy beings soar upwards in glorious liberty, joyously exercising every faculty, growing in knowledge and in power, and ever advancing in spiritual manhood, in nearness and likeness to GOD.

There is but one more miracle that seems to belong to this class of disease—the healing of the man whose right hand was withered. As we have already noticed, sin does not always entirely possess a man. Just as this man was sound everywhere except in his one hand, so we may see many a man with one besetting fault; but very often that fault really spoils his whole character, just as the uselessness of a man's right hand will hinder him from getting his living and will spoil his whole life.

It was the sin of Adam's right hand that ruined himself and the world. A sudden blow struck with the right hand makes a man a murderer, and turns a free and useful being into a felon, doomed to shameful and premature death. A few words written make a man a forger, with the cheerless life of a convict before him. Can we not carry out the analogy, and see that sins, that bring us before the tribunal of GOD, may in like manner, but yet more terribly, work out awful results?

In healing this man, as generally in His miracles, our LORD makes the patient do something himself. He says, "Stretch forth thy hand." We have already

dwell upon this. We cannot save ourselves; we cannot do away our sins; but what GOD has bidden us do, that we must do, if we will have His pardon. The gift is from GOD, but we must at least stretch forth the hand to receive it.

At this Season there seems to be a special fitness in this act. When the great Atonement for all sin was made, the Saviour stretched forth His Hands upon the Cross. He hung paralysed, every limb immovable. His Hands stretched wide out; and through this stretching forth of His Hands we were made whole. So in the primitive Church Christians prayed with the hands stretched forth; their attitude itself a Sacrament, pleading by the outstretched Hands of their Saviour upon His Cross. So, in prophetic action, Moses prayed with outstretched hands, and gained victory in the unequal fight for his people. So now before the Throne the Man CHRIST JESUS, the Priest, pleads for us, and for His Church, ever making intercession for us, who are fighting and struggling on, sorely beset. Yes, CHRIST'S lightest word endures for ever. "Stretch forth thy hand," He said to a crippled sufferer one day in the synagogue at Capernaum, and the man was restored to health and vigour. But the act was not over. The word lives on. To each soul it is still spoken. To us, with our failings, our sins, our sorrows, our infirmities, our wants, our fears, He still says, "Stretch forth thy hands;" lift them up unto the LORD; pray with uplifted hands, and hearts that strain upwards. "They that are CHRIST'S have crucified the flesh." Their hands are outstretched, nailed to the Cross, helpless for motion and work, paralysed; but the deep of their need calls to the deep of His mercy and love, and He makes them whole.

Fifth Sunday in Lent.

SIN, A DEAFNESS OF THE SOUL.

ISAIAH had prophesied of the days of MESSIAH, that "the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped, and the tongue of the dumb shall sing." We might expect, then, that among the miracles of CHRIST supernatural cures of these unfortunates would be found. In the general enumeration of our LORD'S miracles, the Evangelists say that many deaf and dumb persons came and were restored to the use of their deficient faculties. One or two cases are briefly narrated, and one is described at length.

Learned physiologists tell us that in the case of the deaf and dumb the original fault is in the hearing, and that dumbness is merely the result of ignorance of the nature of sounds. This seems to be proved when we find that modern practical science can actually teach the deaf and dumb to speak. They are taught by touch to use the vocal organs, which are often quite perfect, and so can express their thoughts and wishes in articulate words, which we can hear and understand, though the mutes themselves cannot hear anything that they so mechanically utter.

Speech is so common that we forget how wonderful and how noble a faculty it is. The lower animals have thought and reason, more or less; some appear to have an unknown method of communicating certain ideas to one another. Many have instincts that enable them to do what we cannot do. But no animal has speech. Some birds can be taught to repeat

words, but they cannot converse or express their own thoughts or wants in words. We see, then, that a deaf and dumb person is by his infirmity very sadly degraded; his manhood seems to be impaired, and he is lowered to the condition of the dumb animal. The tongue, therefore, is called the "best member" that a man has. It is a small part of the body, but it is all-powerful. As St. James reminds us, it is like the rudder of a ship or the bit in the horse's mouth. A persuasive tongue can sway multitudes, can rule the destinies of empires, and can change the fate of immortal beings. The tongue "set on fire of hell," used as an instrument by evil spirits or evil men, can ruin souls. The tongue attuned to speak by the Pentecostal fire can convert sinners and add to the number of the saints.

We might expect, then, that the Saviour of the world, the Teacher of truth, the Restorer of man to his lost dignity and privileges, would certainly, in His instruction of men and in His revelation of GOD by miracles, give some lessons in connection with the faculty of speech. This is made all the more probable when we listen to St. John, who is divinely instructed to describe CHRIST as the "Word of GOD." In His eternal generation from the Father, in His revelation to us of the mind and will and nature of GOD, in His power to affect our minds, our hearts, and our lives, in all these ways the title "the Word of GOD" symbolises the nature and work of the Son of GOD. Words reveal thoughts which cannot otherwise be known; words sway our judgment; words generate acts. It is CHRIST who is preached, CHRIST crucified, and faith cometh by hearing. CHRIST dwells, lives, works, in us, and transforms us into His own likeness. It is the ear, not of the body, but of the soul, that must receive the Word; and that ear may be deaf, just as the bodily ear may be deaf.

The old prophets who spoke in GOD'S name to their people, and spoke in vain, said that this spiritual deafness had come upon them. They had ears, but heard not. They were "like the deaf adder," and so, as if to shame them, the prophets address themselves to things without life, to the senseless earth, to cities, to beasts and other deaf and dumb creatures, who will not be more unmoved by their words than these reasonable men endowed with human faculties and senses.

It is a law of nature that faculties gain power by use, and are weakened, and even lost, if they are not exercised. The mechanic, the musician, the artist, by constant and long-continued practice, teaches his hand to do wonderful feats with readiness and ease. The sailor and the astronomer can see what men whose eyes have not been so trained cannot in the least discover. The little child has limbs, but has to learn how to walk by patient trying. Just so the spiritual body may be developed by constant and energetic exercise of its senses and powers, and the saint may see, and hear, feel and do, what other men can neither do nor even understand.

In the Mammoth Cave in America there are fish, but there is no light in the underground cave, and consequently the fish in it have no eyes. There is the external appearance and semblance of eyes, but the internal mechanism is wanting. The eyes seem to have gradually wasted away through disuse. In many other instances naturalists point out organs in animals that have never been developed, or which have been weakened and rendered merely rudimentary. Still more marvellous changes may be seen in the transformation of certain creatures, whose internal and external parts undergo alteration, growth, or extinction as their environment requires. Some insects pass through several conditions; at one time living in the water, at another flying in the air, then

existing upon or under the ground. The frog is at first a fish, with gills to extract the oxygen from the water; but as it develops into a land-animal the gills waste away and lungs are formed. Sea-birds have been fed upon grain, and pigeons upon flesh, till their digestive organs have been entirely transformed. The fossil remains of fish and land-animals of former ages of the world's history, when temperature, light, and vegetable life were very different from what they are now, show that nature adapted itself to the conditions that prevailed, and that then, as now, functions that were not required were in abeyance, while those that were necessary to life and progress were active, and inclined to grow and expand.

Is it not reasonable, then, to suppose that the faculties and powers of the soul should follow the same laws? Can we not see how the sins of the fathers must be visited upon the children, and that irreligion may be hereditary, as truly as a bodily disease, or a particular feature, or a habit, or a taste? The deaf and dumb are said to be very often the offspring of consanguineous marriages. If the law of nature avenges itself when it is violated, why should not the law of GOD, in spiritual powers, in like manner, work out its own punishments? We are not only wonderfully made, but fearfully made. Men may and do degrade themselves, till they are more animal than spiritual. Men and women congratulate themselves that they are not vicious, that they do not lead immoral lives, that they are not guilty of gross sins; but surely that is but little for a reasonable being, endowed with noble spiritual faculties and powers, to boast of. Sins of omission are as fatal and much more common, than actual sins. Our LORD'S teaching everywhere insists upon this. Look at the faces of some people whom we meet in the streets. Is not the animal more visible than the intellectual and the spiritual? Is not the mark of the beast

more evident than the image of GOD ? It is partly hereditary, as we have said, partly by actual choice, that the spiritual ear has become deaf. The ear does not care to hear the word from GOD ; then it grows weak and impotent by disease ; and at last its powers disappear altogether. People keep away from church from distaste, because they like other things better ; and then, when they come, those other things are still ringing in their ears ; they cannot keep up attention, they are practically deaf ; they never hear what is said, or they hear and do not understand ; and they are not converted and healed, though the Great Healer is close at hand, and does mighty works upon others at their side.

People put away religion because, as they say, they feel no want of it, no pleasure in it. They seem to think that this settles the matter ; whereas they ought to be alarmed at the fact that there is a failure in their spiritual organisation ; just as a man would be alarmed who found that a bodily sense was becoming weaker and weaker.

It is often forgotten that sloth is one of the deadly sins. There are many idle men, and still more idle women, in the world, and this idleness degenerates them. Men and women have faculties and powers, which GOD gave them to use, to develop, to be a joy and a blessing to themselves and to others, but being never exercised, these faculties weaken, and are consumed with a deadly atrophy. Their talents are buried. What will they say when He Who lent them demands them with usury ? Just so it is with spiritual gifts. On every side there are men and women who were meant to be saints, and who through mere sloth are very poor and contemptible creatures.

But now let us briefly notice the circumstances of our LORD'S miraculous healing of the deaf and dumb. In this case, as in many others, it was through the intercession of friends that the cure was effected.

The Church is a body corporate. If one member suffers, all suffer with it; if one rejoices, all are gladdened. This great fact is little understood in the present day. Schism and want of faith have obscured one of the most noble truths that ought to be the glory of Christians. Intercessory prayer, therefore, is neglected, because it is not understood, and blessings that might be had are never obtained. "Ye have not because ye ask not."

When the man is brought to our LORD, he is led away by Him from the multitude into some quiet place. We have already noticed how our LORD not infrequently did this, and how we learn from His act that it is often necessary that old associates should be left, and a thorough change of life be adopted, before a new and better beginning can be made. Then our LORD put His Finger into his ear and restored his hearing. We notice that, in another place, our LORD claims to do His miracles with "the Finger of GOD;" and the same phrase is used with respect to the miracles of Moses. The Law, too, was said to have been written at Sinai by "the Finger of God;" and in the Mosaic ritual, the unclean were reconciled by being touched by the priest's finger, which had been dipped in holy oil. All these symbolic acts point to the work of the HOLY GHOST in the Church. "In faithful hearts he writes the law, the Finger of GOD'S Hand." Just as the fingers carry out the designs of a man's mind, so does GOD, by the spiritual agencies of His Church, effect His will. There is still power to heal in the Church of CHRIST. The Word of GOD is quick and powerful. The deaf ears may still be opened, and the soul that was dumb as a beast be made to speak and praise GOD.

The same peculiar act was used by our LORD in this as in some other miracles which we have noticed: "He spit, and touched his tongue," and then the man spake plainly. He had not altogether lost the power

of speech, but almost. Perhaps he could make sounds, but could not frame words, and so, as we have said, he had become more like a dumb beast than a man. So some are more, some less, spiritually dumb, more or less like the beasts, fallen from man's high estate.

Then our LORD sighed; perhaps at the sight of human degradation, as elsewhere we are told that He groaned, or wept, or cried, "O faithless generation, how long shall I be with you, how long shall I suffer you?" and He looked up to heaven, as if thinking of the order, obedience, and happiness there, where GOD'S will is done, in contrast with the misery that men drag down upon them here, through disobedience and wilful choice of evil. Or perhaps it was even at the thought of the doubtful benefit He was conferring upon this man. For so long as he was dumb, one great source of sin was closed, but with the restored gift of speech would come the numberless sins of the tongue. So it must ever be. GOD'S gifts involve responsibility, and are a blessing or a curse as men use or abuse them. Better for some if they were dumb than that they should sin against GOD, against their neighbour, and against their own souls, as they do, by multitudes of idle words, by words untrue, profane, or words that will produce an evil crop of mischief far and wide; for "If any man seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, that man's religion is vain;" and "For every idle word (that is, literally, every word that does no work) men shall give account in the Day of Judgment."

"He that hath ears to hear, let him hear." Over and over again our LORD repeats these words. His people were dull of hearing. Never man spake as He, yet they could not hear. They closed their ears and hardened their heart, lest they should be converted and He should heal them. There are none so deaf as those who will not hear:—

"The deaf heart, the dumb by choice,
The laggard soul that will not wake,
The guilt that scorns to be forgiven,
These baffle e'en the spells of heaven."

The dumb animals cannot speak; they cannot understand human language, yet they learn to do what we wish, to obey what we command; but men hear and disobey the voice of God.

Well does the Church preface each day's service with the warning of Israel's bad example, and cry to us, "To-day, if ye will hear His voice, harden not your hearts." Shall all voices be heard except His? We are taught to speak by what we hear. "Take heed how ye hear." As there are eyes that are colour-blind, so there are ears that can hear some sounds, but not others. There are ears that take no pleasure in music, that are untrue and cannot detect discords; and old age makes all sounds dim, and hearing imperfect and deceitful. "To-day," then, cries the Church, "to-day, before spiritual disease and spiritual decrepitude come on; to-day, while you can hear, hearken and obey, lest, hearing and questioning, you become dumb, like Zecharias; or, hearing and fearing not, you lose the power of repentance, like Judas; or, hearing and postponing, you have no other opportunity, like Felix; or, hearing and boasting, you fall terribly, like Peter; or, hearing and mocking, you hear nothing more till the crack of doom, like the antediluvians and the sons of Lot in Sodom."

There is an old legend of one who, wandering at noonday in a wood, stopped to listen to the song of some marvellous bird, and stood silent, holding his breath, ravished by its sweetness, as he thought, but a little while; and then returned by the way he had come, sighing sadly because the heavenly music had so quickly ceased, but found that three hundred years had passed. There is one Voice that can

charm the heart of man, and make time pass, and turn troubles to gladness. Let us hear His words, for they are sweet; so sweet that they who hear them keep silence to hear them better; so sweet that they make us dumb, for our speaking would drown their sound; and if we were to speak, what could we answer fittingly?

The day draws on apace when we all shall be deaf and dumb; deaf to all sounds of earth, even the voices of our dearest; dumb, for approaching death shall seal our lips. Let us pray now, while we can; pray now, that we may be helped in that day when we shall lie helpless, speechless, prayerless. And may that other day come to us when the touch of the same Restorer shall open our mouth and unstopp our ears, and we shall find ourselves in the midst of the hymning chorus of GOD'S countless hosts of joyous creatures, and we too shall break forth into singing, in the song that we have never learned, but which wells forth instinctively from the lips that have never ceased to pray, from those whose ears have been ever open to the voice of GOD, the never-ceasing song of thanksgiving, adoration, and praise before the Throne of GOD and of the Lamb.

Sixth Sunday in Lent.

SIN, THE DEATH OF THE SOUL.

ALL disease is partial death. All the miracles of healing were partial resurrections. In some cases one or other of the five senses was dead ; in others a fatal malady had laid hold of the body, and life was being surely vanquished, and death was full in view and inevitable. There was no more difficulty with our LORD in raising the dead to life than in giving sight to the blind or health to the leper. If we knew all the secrets of nature, we should probably see that giving life to the departed was not different in kind, but only in degree, from giving health to the sick. A clever architect can not only repair the wing of a palace that has become dilapidated, but can rebuild the whole edifice, if it has been totally destroyed. It is probable that our LORD raised many more dead to life than those three whose cases the Evangelists record. In His message to the Baptist, He speaks of such miracles as equally common with those that restored the sick to health. Most likely there were good reasons for suppressing many particulars. It is only in St. John's Gospel, written at a distance, and long after the event, that the name is mentioned of any of those who were raised from the dead. And, as we shall see, there appears to be a special instruction in spiritual truth conveyed to us in the circumstances of these three resurrections, which have been selected for perpetual remembrance. There were many blind, lame, possessed, palsied, who were not

healed. We cannot believe that the cases selected were taken at random. So we believe that those who were recalled from the unseen world, to live a second life and to die a second death, were chosen by GOD for this singular experience, and that what has been written is given to us for our learning, and that we must search and examine it, as the geologist scrutinises the fossils and the rocks.

Let us, then, take the three miracles of resurrection as parables to teach us some truths respecting sin, and its consequences to the soul, and how in CHRIST both one and the other are done away.

A maiden of twelve years old, in all the sweet freshness of youth and beauty, in the perfection of virgin loveliness, in that Eastern clime, is seized by fatal disease. There is no hope; the last agony has come; the mother watches fast by the bed; but the father, hearing that JESUS is near, desperate, heart-broken, hardly hoping, yet unable to refrain from doing anything that may perhaps bring good, hurries to the house where JESUS is dining, probably St. Matthew's, and interrupting His teaching, passionately prays Him to save his dying child. Our LORD at once rises from table and goes with the sorrowing father; but delay occurs. A poor woman, who had been dying for twelve years, as the daughter of Jairus had been living for twelve years, by mighty faith snatches a cure from CHRIST as He passes; so that it happens, but doubtless not by accident, that before He reaches the house friends meet Him with the tidings that death has finished its work. They seem to think that this puts the matter out of the power even of this great wonder-worker. But our LORD bids the father not heed them, but sustain his faith in Him. He enters the house, and quietly puts out the noisy weepers, who, according to Oriental custom, are filling the air with lamentations, saying, "The maid is not dead, but sleepeth." He takes

the father and mother and three disciples, and in the calm silence lays His hand gently upon the white little hand of the child, and as if speaking to the living, bids her rise. In a moment life returns; health mantles the pale cheek; the child starts from her bed, scarce knowing where she is; then ready to faint with the tumult of amazement and bewildering sensations, our LORD calls all to common-sense duty by bidding them give her some much-needed food.

Here, then, we have pictured to us the deadly effects of sin, even in its least offensive and terrible forms. The little corpse was pale, but still beautiful. Death had but just done its work; the body was uncorrupt, still in life's dress; lying upon a bed, not on a bier; in the house, not in the grave, or even on the way to it. Such is the state of the soul that has sinned in thought, secretly, unknown to others, that has been surprised suddenly, or first yielded to inherited predisposition to evil. Yet the result is death. Adam stood in the full strength and beauty of his perfect manhood, when he had disobeyed GOD'S command; yet his soul was dead within him, as GOD had said. He had cut himself off from GOD, whence his life came, and by Whom it was momentarily sustained; and, like a branch torn from a tree, he was dead. Oh, that we could understand this and fear; and when we have fallen into mortal sin, hurry to the feet of CHRIST, Who is the resurrection and the life, that we may be pardoned and arise again living souls! Alas! are there not many dead souls about us? Every sign of death is seen in them. Every spiritual sense and faculty is useless, lifeless. The lips do not move in prayer; the heart does not beat in unison with the heart of CHRIST; the hands are not outstretched towards GOD; the spirit cleaves to the earth; no voice rouses it; no aspiration energises it; there is the shell and appearance of a man made in the image of GOD, but there is no life, no growth,

no appetite, no movement ; all is of the earth ; to the earth and corruption it returns.

The next miracle is remarkable, because it was performed unasked ; unless the widowed mother's streaming tears can be said to have appealed with silent eloquence to the compassion of the Man of Sorrows. They were carrying a young man of Nain to his grave, and JESUS met them. To the mother He said, "Weep not." Then He went up to the bier and laid His hand upon it and bade the dead live, and it was done.

There seems to be here a worse case than the last. Death has triumphed ; his victim is no longer reckoned among the living ; they carry the body from their company to darkness and corruption. So is it with sin that has gone on from thought to act, from secret consent to open transgression of the laws of GOD and man. Here even men, for their own defence, separate the evil-doer from their midst, in punishment and in self-preservation. They consider the case desperate ; no one even asks for pardon ; no one hopes for restoration. Yet here the Saviour can help, and does restore. So it was that He earned the title of the Friend of sinners. So it has been many times since. Many a Magdalén, many a one who has rightly called himself the chief of sinners, many a prodigal, many a condemned malefactor, has turned to the All-merciful and found pardon and life, when the due reward of evil deeds had been sadly reaped, and all men shook their heads, and said that hope was passed, and that justice must have its course, unhampered by mercy's pleas.

But there is yet another case that seemed even more desperate, more utterly beyond the region of hope. Lazarus had been buried ; four days had passed since he died. Not only was every limb helpless, every sense inoperative, but the dreadful change had begun ; the body itself was passing away,

dissolving to its original elements, in loathsome, foetid decay, a wreck and a ruin ! It was CHRIST'S will that so it should be. He had been told that His friend was sick ; a word would have made him whole, but He would not utter it. He knew that he was dead, but He tarried still where He was, that GOD'S glory might be the more manifested ; that we might be taught His boundless power and grace ; just as He had tarried on the road to the house of Jairus, and the child had died while He was talking with the poor woman who had been healed by touching the hem of His garment.

The record of the raising of Lazarus is full of the most interesting and touching circumstances, which greatly tempt us to linger over them, and to draw out the marvellous and blessed teaching with which they abound. But we must deny ourselves all this, and keep the one clear, plain lesson before our eyes. That shortest verse of the Bible, "JESUS wept," contains a whole Gospel. The faith of the sisters is wonderful. The groaning of JESUS, that is so variously understood, from indignation at the sight of the misery resulting from the Fall, to reluctance to call Lazarus back from Abraham's bosom to a world of pain and sin, and to a second death, the thought of which, a legend says, caused Lazarus never again to smile during the thirty years of his second life ; the prayer ; the hardness of the Jews, who could see all this, and yet not only still continue in unbelief, but plot all the more eagerly to put JESUS to death, and Lazarus with Him,—all this, and much more, must not now detain us. All we have to notice is, that CHRIST called the dead by name, and that he came forth alive ; and being freed from his grave-clothes by friends' hands, he returned to life and home, sound and well.

If, then, the widow's son, carried to his grave, represents the sinner who has been carried away

by habitual sin, till there seems no hope of repentance, this case of Lazarus depicts a yet lower depth of sinful degradation, the unusual cases of monsters of iniquity. Even for these, then, there is mercy with GOD. The atonement for sin was infinite, and these men's sins, though enormous, are but finite. There is nothing too hard for the LORD. "Deep answereth to deep;" the deep of His mercy to the deep of the greatest sinner's greatest need.

There is a touching legend of the Middle Ages, of one who had outraged every law of GOD and man, and who, desiring to repent and be pardoned, went from priest to priest, and from bishop to bishop, but none would absolve him. So he wandered through Europe, from shrine to shrine, till he came to the Pope himself. He found him sitting in a garden, and then and there, without waiting, in his impetuosity, for due forms, to him he confessed his life of violence, lust, and apostasy, and implored absolution and reconciliation. But the Pope started from him with horror, and thrusting his walking-stick into the ground, left it and him, saying that as soon would that dry staff return to life and fruitfulness as such a sinner would be forgiven. Next day, as the Pope walked again in the garden, lo! the stick had budded, like Aaron's rod, and he saw that there was pardon through the Precious Blood of CHRIST, even for the vilest of sinners.

Judas is perhaps the only human being who is absolutely said to be lost. But was he lost because of his dreadful sin? Surely not. It were a dis-honour to CHRIST to say so. "The Blood of JESUS CHRIST cleanseth from all sin." It was the im-penitence of Judas, not his sin, that ruined him. It was his going away from CHRIST that sealed his doom.

Oh, let us understand this, that sin is death, but JESUS is life! He says not, "I shall be the resurrec-tion," but, "I am the resurrection." We are living

now in Him, or we are dead. Many times we die ; many times we rise again. Sin is death to us, but to CHRIST it is but sleep ; for His mercy can restore us, His pardon can cleanse us. The Christian is Lazarus, for the name means "GOD is my helper." Lazarus was raised, but died again ; so the righteous falleth seven times, and riseth again. Just as a ship goes on her way, rising and falling upon the waves, so does the Christian soul stagger on to the haven where it would be. JESUS CHRIST came into the world to save sinners—great sinners, as well as those who have not sinned so deeply. "Whosoever believeth in Him, though he were dead, yet shall he live." The sick He can heal ; the dead He can raise—the dead in trespasses and sins. The dead hear His voice and live ; for He is, now and ever, the Resurrection and the Life. By nature we are dead, but our baptism grafted us into Him, Who is the Tree of Life. In Him we must abide ; to Him we must return, if sin has separated us from Him ; from Him we must derive the food that sustains our spiritual life ; by Him we conquer death and hell ; and He, Who is now our resurrection and life, will raise us up to eternal life at the last day.

And now let us just notice one or two interesting points in all the miracles that indicate how far man is called upon to co-operate in this blessed work of CHRIST. In the case of the daughter of Jairus, it was the father's earnest entreaty, his unshaken faith in the power and love of CHRIST, that was the first instrumental cause in bringing life to the dead. Here, as in so many other instances, we see how we may help others by prayer, and by putting them within reach of the merciful and Almighty Hands. Then we notice that, when the child was raised from death to life, our LORD bade her parents give her food. This they could do ; therefore He does not do it for them. So must the pardoned soul seek

food in the Holy Communion, that its renewed life may be sustained.

In the next miracle the Church's work is still more clearly seen. Her son is dead, yet the mother follows weeping, and her tears excite the compassion of JESUS, and, without any other appeal, He restores the lost. So in the Litany and other prayers, but especially by the great Eucharistic sacrifice, the Church prays for all, though they are past hearing and knowing it. Many a strange conversion is, doubtless, the result of such prayers. The Church is typified by the widow; for her LORD has gone, and each son is esteemed her only one, her darling; for, like her LORD, she loves each as if there were no other. And so, when the dead is raised, he is delivered to his mother, for she best, she only, can give him the care, the home, the love, he needs.

In the case of Lazarus similar truths are shadowed forth. CHRIST alone could give life, but He left others to loose the grave-clothes and free the fettered body from the trappings of the dead. So GOD pardons, while man absolves. GOD forgives sin, but man may restore the penitent to the Church, and help him on his way. The father bade his servants clothe his prodigal son. Our LORD ordered others to move the stone from the grave. One He bade wash in Siloam; others to go to Jerusalem; another to stretch out his hand. So it is still; the human and the Divine are mixed; GOD'S power and man's obedience; the might of GOD'S fiat and the condition of our poor faith; the finished work of CHRIST, once for all accomplished, and the daily application of that work by the ministry of His Church. Nature has a similar rule. Some things she alone can do; some are left to us. The heart receives and sends out the blood; the lungs expand and contract; the unseen chemistry of digestion, nutrition, restoration, goes on involuntarily, automatically, without us;

but we must provide food ; we must, by ordinary prudence, care, and knowledge, protect the body from cold and heat, from injury and death.

Let us remember that the Church is GOD'S own instrument, not man's invention. Its doctrines, its practices, its principles, will bear investigation and criticism. But the wise and devout do not criticise, but gladly use what is provided for their sore needs. Sin and death are the ever-present dangers, the ever-attacking enemies of the soul ; the faithful know, by happy experience, that CHRIST is the resurrection and the life, and that "whosoever believeth in Him shall never die."

Easter Day.

THE ANGEL IN THE SEPULCHRE.

WHAT a strange sight it was that presented itself to Mary Magdalen as she gazed into the sepulchre on Easter morning! An angel sitting calm and beautiful in the place of the dead! A living being in a grave! A young man, in the perfection of strength and beauty, in the place of decay and horror! An angel from heaven's bright realms in earth's darkest and most shameful corner! Life in death's domain; whiteness and purity where foulness is expected; placid rest where wasteful, cruel destruction usually does its worst! A sure sign that some great event has happened; that Death, man's last worst enemy, has received a defeat; that the grave has changed its character and has been stripped of its awful attributes.

Mankind has ever respected the graves of the dead. He has reared up mounds, or monstrous stones, or exquisitely carved monuments. He has laid there his gifts and offerings. He has made periodical visits to the place where he has laid his great, his loved, his beautiful ones. But he has carefully kept outside the tomb; he has had no wish to uncover the sad picture that lies hidden beneath the storied stone, to remove the beautiful mask that veils the terrible, unwelcome truth.

But to-day there is a wide-open grave, and within it a bright, joyous guardian, who invites mourners to gaze there, without fear of wounded feelings or outraged instincts. All death is revolting to living crea-

tures; but man's death is something more. It is GOD'S own dreadful punishment of sin. It is the never-ceasing proof that the curse of the Fall is still working. The grave is the gate that shuts out the light of day. It is the end of life's brightness, of love's hopes and joys; and man fears that it is the entrance to grim, desolate realms where retribution overtakes transgression and a man's sins at last find him out.

Birth and marriage have ever been surrounded with joy and brightness, white and gay colours, and goodly company and good cheer; these have seemed fitting for such occasions, as fitting and seemly then as they have been esteemed out of place at death and the grave-side.

All this is changed to-day. CHRIST had said, more than once, of the dead that they did but sleep, and in proof He had called back the never-quenched spirit, to prove its continued life by entering again the deserted body. But now He Himself has passed through that dark valley; like Samson, letting Himself be bound only that His mighty power might be seen and known and His victory be more complete. Till He came men lamented the dead with despairing sorrow. He has changed all, and says, "Blessed are the dead, for they rest. Blessed are the holy dead, for they hunger no more, nor thirst; all tears are wiped away; the conflict is over, the victory is won; they have risen to a higher, an endless life."

Such has ever been GOD'S way. In the beginning the earth was without form and void, and darkness reigned; but out of the darkness there came light; out of Chaos, order and beauty. The black, noisome earth is the fruitful womb from which springs forth the tender green shoot, the delicate flower, tinted like the sky at sunset, scented with perfume that seems like the breath of a sinless world.

Look at that poor wooden toy that man has made.

A child may stamp it to splinters ; a shower will make it fall to pieces. Presently a divinely taught artist takes it up, and from its frail earth-born bosom will come such melodies as will entrance the soul, sweet breathings that whisper thoughts which no words can describe, grand martial shouts that express the noblest thoughts and stir the great to deeds of daring. There is music in heaven. Music has strictest laws. Our voices, our instruments, are, must be, in harmony with the angels' harps and the songs that echo in the eternal realms. Yet whence do they come ? How are they produced ? From what vile origins ! by what feeble powers ! Is it not all like the bright, pure, white-stoled angel sitting throned, beautiful, happy, in the open sepulchre ?

Shall we seek more resemblances in GOD'S works and providences ? What was Isaac, *i.e.*, "laughter," the noble boy that gladdened the dead old age of Abraham and Sarah ? What was the birth of the great race of Israel from the slave-yards of Egypt ? What was the Church of CHRIST, the creation of twelve poor peasants out of an apostate nation and an effete civilisation, like the honey that Samson found in the dead lion's carcass ?

But why tarry over symbols when the reality is at hand ? What need to wonder at effects when we may see and handle the cause ? There was a resurrection long before CHRIST came forth from Joseph's tomb, and angels were present then. There was a poor maiden of the Stem of Jesse at Nazareth ; to her cottage came Gabriel, brightening that lowly place, as this angel made the grave beautiful to-day. And when Mary spake the word of faith and obedience the prophecy was fulfilled ; the Seed of the woman, the Son of David, took human flesh. What was the angel in the sepulchre to that ? Humanity was cursed and dead, but He Who is Life sprang forth from it, pure and undefiled.

Then, again, at Bethlehem, we see an angel, this time in a sheepfold, and he tells his auditors of another resurrection. The hidden GOD has appeared. In a stable, among cattle, the Incarnate lies. Humanity has budded, and blossomed, and borne fruit; human nature has had its resurrection. It died in Adam; it rose when CHRIST was born, when GOD-made-flesh came forth and was the second Adam. The lowliest joined to the highest; a contradiction to poor reason, a triumph and glory to faith.

Human religions follow the opposite rule to this. They descend from great to little, from good to bad, from bad to worse. When Egyptian worship was in all its glory, one who lived then, and saw it, describes its shameful, disappointing climax. Never has the world seen such magnificence in external worship as was seen then. Far away from the Temple stretched the avenue of sphinxes. He who approached the shrine was warned long before of the sanctity of the abode of the god. Huge figures, with solemn, majestic faces, eyed him into silent recollection as he paced on, each seeming to have a menacing scowl for the careless and the undevout. The worshipper is awe-struck more and more each step he takes. At last he comes to a towering propylon, built of mighty stones, painted with a thousand symbolic figures, guarded by grave custodians, who stop him, question, instruct, warn him, and by-and-by let him pass on. There is still an avenue in long perspective, shutting out the common world, shutting in the vision, so that nothing but the distant Temple can be seen. The magnificence of the surroundings increases; there are guards at short intervals; there are priests; there are lustral rites and purifications that must not on any account be omitted, complicated ceremonies, no single item of which any one dare neglect or even carelessly perform. At last the Temple gate is reached, jealously guarded. There

are again more hindrances, more questionings, more observances. Then who shall describe the grandeur, the beauty, the costliness, of the interior of the Temple ? Vastness, height, elaboration, the best and noblest that man can do after centuries of civilisation, centuries of patient improvement, are there. Incense, music, gold and jewels, white-robed priests, gorgeous endless processions winding their way amidst the forest of pictured columns. And all leads on to the innermost shrine, the most sacred adytum. And what is there ? The historian tells us that the high-priest, with many prostrations, with awe-struck face, with warning finger, leads on the visitant to a heavy curtain that hides the holiest place, and drawing it aside, allows a few moments' contemplation of the object of worship. And what is it ? What does all this elaborate preparation lead to ? Dimly, in the half-lighted chamber, there was seen, wallowing upon a sumptuous crimson carpet, a bull, a crocodile, or a serpent !

Much the same are modern systems. The supernatural is done away ; revelation is disbelieved ; GOD is denied ; yet man must worship something. He is bidden to worship Humanity, an idealised self, a future, highly civilised, vastly progressed human nature, in some indefinite and vastly distant period, perhaps to be developed and evolved ! Is this progress ? Is this an advance, an improvement upon Christianity ? These systems have, in point of fact, been tried, and they have utterly failed. There is little or nothing new in modern unbelief. Clever, restless minds have thought out all these questions ages ago. Before Christianity came the world was trying to do without GOD. We know the result. The world was like a sepulchre, the grave of all men's hopes ; and in that grave Christianity sat herself, like this angel in that garden grave ; and she, a messenger from GOD, told men of a risen Saviour, of hope, of

high purpose, of a life worth living, and her message turned despair to joy. It freed the slave ; it raised woman ; it created a noble civilisation. It taught men how to live and how to die. And what it did for the world it did also in individual hearts. Magdalens who are but living graves, prodigals who had wasted life and had nothing but its dead husks left, to these came a messenger of light and joy, and they rose again from death to life. What is the heart of the communicant ? A poor, sinful, failing man's heart, more like a sepulchre than a palace ; yet thither comes not angels, but the angels' LORD, to dwell, to lighten, to give life. And so old Polycarp went to martyrdom with tottering steps, but joyous face, knowing that he bore within his feeble, dying frame the ever-living LORD, His Saviour and His GOD.

And shall we not take one step more, and look on to higher progress yet ? What are those "good desires" of which the Collect speaks to-day ? Are they not like this bright angel in the sepulchre ? Just one little spot of light in the midst of darkness, one living thing where there is so much death ; dead hopes, dead affections, dead purposes, a thousand thousand growths that have sprung up there and lived awhile, and then died down, till our heart is but a graveyard, where all we once loved best lies buried. Yet in these "good desires," heaven-born, there is Easter hope. We pray that they may be "brought to good effect," that they may be seed-germs that will live and grow in that spiritual spring-tide when death has passed away ; and we, in bodies that have sprung, we know not how, from the graves of those mortal bodies, shall join that white-robed host, each like this beauteous being, in perpetual youth, because we ever behold the Face of GOD, and evermore live in Him.



First Sunday after Easter.

MAGDALEN AT THE SEPULCHRE.

THE story of Magdalen's visit to the sepulchre on Easter morning is most picturesque and most touching. She who "loved much, because she had had much forgiven," could not rest for thinking of her LORD. Like a devout and faithful daughter of Abraham, she "kept the Sabbath day, according to the commandment," but "very early, while it was yet dark," she was at the grave. The absorbing devotion of a woman's heart to the object of her love; the passionate yearning of a soul towards the Saviour Who had raised it from degradation to self-respect, from ruin to purity, from despair to peace, hope, and joy, these made her impatiently watch the slowly passing hours of that sad Sabbath, and kept her eyes wakeful all the livelong night. She is terrified by the shock of the earthquake, but not deterred from her purpose. As soon as she may she creeps down the dark, silent street, craves of the sleepy watchman permission to pass the gate, not yet opened, and then she speeds along in the darkness, under the calm canopy of stars, to the garden where His loved body lay Who was all in all to her.

What did she feel? What were her hopes? Most likely she was stunned and beaten down, past all thought and reasoning by the awful sights of Friday, by the overwhelming, crushing avalanche of horrors that had swept away and buried deep all her soul's tenderest, dearest emotions and aspirations. She had

seen that loving, mighty One call from death and corruption her loved and lost brother. She had sat at His feet and listened to His words, till she had passed out of conscious connection with this life, and had forgotten how time passed, and that daily bread was wanted by others, if not by herself, "living in phantasy," her spirit soaring after her LORD'S, up to the unseen spirit-world, "where beyond these voices there is peace." Dimly and timidly she had conceived the wondrous truth that this was He Who should redeem Israel. Modestly, and without confessing it, for fear of her superiors who denied it, she acknowledged Him as MESSIAH, Whom her woman's heart loved, and to Whom she ministered with exquisite delight to herself, when He came as the guest of that quiet home at Bethany. She had not argued, but her woman's instinct had led her on to an unshaken conviction that this was the CHRIST. And now, when reason seemed to say that she had placed her hopes where they had been swallowed up, as by an earthquake, when she could no longer try to persuade even herself that her hopes were true and well founded, she shuts her eyes and goes on, led by blind love, carried forward by the mighty impulse of that past purpose of her life, that now seemed to be utterly extinguished.

So she, who was last at the Cross, was first at the Grave. It was too early for the embalming, and the other friends of CHRIST had not come. Doubtless she thought within herself that most likely the guard would keep her away from the Tomb ; and even if they did not, what could she do ? Why did she go there ? What was her purpose ? She knew not ; she cared nothing for "Why and wherefore ?" for "What is the use ?" and "What afterwards ?" only she was compelled to get near her LORD, be it only His pale, mangled Body, hidden in the dark rock, out of sight, out of reach.

Do not we know something of this? Have not some of us, who "have loved and lost," felt an impulse, like that which drove Mary on irresistibly, to get near to that which remained of the Being Whom she loved?

There was darkness everywhere. Only in that true, loving heart there was a small glimmering light, fed by the good store of oil that had been laid in as she sat at His feet, drank in His words, pondering them in her heart, and gazing into His Face, Who is the true Light. A woman's loving instinct; a faithful soul's inspired trust in Him Who has saved it,—these were her guides, these her reasons, her arguments, as she stole along weeping under the stars, through the dewy garden, towards these pulchre. Poor Mary! Poor shrinking woman! she is ready to turn back many times, as she thinks of the coarse, rude men whom the rulers have set there to guard and watch the tomb; but something drives her on; she has a double consciousness; she has two minds; but the weaker feminine will is overborne, she knows not how, by another and a far more powerful force that will not be denied. She draws near, and her poor heart beats audibly in the silence, as she peers through the darkness to catch sight of the watchmen. She sees no one. All is silent. She creeps a few steps nearer; still there is no one. Now she can see the Tomb; but there are no soldiers by it. Are they hidden in the deep shadows of the moonlight? Are they asleep? Then perhaps she may steal up close and kiss the cold hard stone, just once. Yes, she will. Softly she steps on, trembling, pale, looking this way and that way for the sleeping watchmen. There is evidently no one there. The place is deserted. She looks again. The grave is open! The closing-stone is thrown down! (Oh, horror! oh, cruel malice of His enemies, that will not even let His poor Body rest in peace; that has robbed her even of that sad consolation of ministering her last kind

offices to the dead ! One more scared look, to make the hideous certainty sure, and she turns and flies breathless to the city, to tell Peter and John the strange, sad, terrible news. They listen with speechless amazement, and then hurry off to see for themselves. She follows, as best she can. The disciples gaze, wonder, and go home again, bewildered. Mary gazes, and stands alone, and blinds herself with a passion of tears, as if she said—

“Gone are the last faint flashes,
Set is the sun of my years ;
And over a few poor ashes
I sit in my darkness and tears.”

Oh, poor desolate heart ! Blow upon blow falls. There seemed nothing more possible, and that the lowest depth had been reached ; but a new agony had now come from an unexpected direction. Where is that dear Body now ? Who has taken it away ? What fresh dishonour are they even now perpetrating upon it ? Shall she never more touch it ? never embrace it again, as she had over and over again pictured to herself, consoling herself with this hope in those long dark hours ?

But, she thinks, did not John say that the grave-cloths were there, wrapped carefully by themselves, and the face-cloth by itself ? She stoops down to see ; and lo ! within the rocky Tomb sit two bright angels, and they say to her, “Woman, why weepest thou ?” She is surprised at nothing. She has got beyond that. She is not terrified ; she asks no questions ; she takes it all as a matter of course ; her one thought is not disturbed, even by an apparition of angels ; she only says, “They have taken away my LORD, and I know not where they have laid Him.”

Let us pause a moment, to learn something for ourselves. There is an Easter marvel here for us, and an Easter blessing. The place of worms and

corruption is now the place of angels ; " He shall give His angels charge over thee to keep thee in all thy ways," even in the way through " the valley of the shadow of death ; " we know now what these words mean ; and those again, " He keepeth all his bones." They that " sleep in JESUS " shall have the angels of JESUS with them. We need not fear the grave, if there are angels there. As we look into the resting-place of our loved ones, with tear-dewed eyes, let us see angels there, and hear their gentle remonstrance, " Why wepest thou ? " That dear one has indeed been taken away, but we do know where they have laid him ; he is laid where angels sit and watch. The baptized body of the Christian is sacred, and worthy of the care of angels. He Whose eyes " did see our substance, yet being imperfect, in Whose book all our members were written, as day by day they were fashioned," will not be unmindful of those bodies that have been made the temples of the HOLY GHOST. The corn of wheat, sown in the earth, may die, but the angel-reaper will gather in a harvest at the Great Day, when the spiritual bodies, sown in corruption, dishonour, weakness, are raised in glory and power. Wherefore comfort one another, this glad Easter-tide, with these words.

But there is another wonderful thought that lies half hidden in this detail of Mary's Easter-day experiences. These watching angels, had they but just come when Mary discerned them ? Surely not. Had they not been there all along ? When Joseph and Nicodemus had lovingly laid the sacred Body in the new tomb, they had been there, at head and foot. When the priests' guard had sealed the stone, and all the while they stood sentinel, the angels were there ; and their presence filled the watchers with an unnamed terror, that so unmanned them, that when the earthquake growled below and shook the rock itself they could stand no more, but turned and fled

in abject fright. When John looked in, and Peter entered, they were there. All the time that Mary sat crying and mourning, they were within a yard or two of her. Doubtless the earth is haunted with angels. They are about our path and about our bed; but it needs special sight to see them. Scientific powers will not discern them. Eyes that are greedy after this world's sights are blinded when they should see angels. There is colour-blindness; there are rays of light too deep and too high for human intelligence to know; so spiritual things are spiritually discerned. Peter and John came and looked, and went away, and saw no angels. Mary sat long, weeping till her eyes were bleared and weakened to all ordinary objects, but her whole soul was filled with longing for her LORD, and so her eyes became fit to see angels. So it has often happened that when death has been near, and earthly things are almost shut out, spiritual presences have been discernible by many of GOD'S children. So have those who have died to the flesh and the world had their spiritual faculties quickened, till they have lived more in the unseen world than in that which is visible, and have held intercourse with its inhabitants, who are never far from any of us.

But Mary looks at the angels, without curiosity and without surprise, hoping they may answer the unasked question that occupies her whole soul; and as she looks, she sees their faces and their attitude suddenly change. There is an expression of awe and a gesture of reverence as they seem to look at some one behind her. She turns to see who it is, and she sees her LORD. But it is still dark, and her weeping has dazed her eyes for things corporeal. She does not recognise CHRIST. She can think of no one but the gardener likely to be there at such an hour; and full of her one thought, she eagerly asks whether he has borne away her LORD'S Body.

She only says, "Him," mentioning no name, though she is speaking, as she thinks, to a stranger; for those whose hearts are full of one thought imagine that all are thinking as they are thinking.

Then there comes the great surprise. There have been many sweet surprises of love in the world's history; but this was the sweetest, the most wonderful. Joy has but few words; love's words are few. Her LORD speaks but one word; and she replies also with but one word. Yet what volumes were contained in each of those two words, "JESUS said unto her, Mary"! He had spoken before, but when He uttered her name in the never-to-be-forgotten tones, then in a moment the senses, that were almost sealed up by grief, came back with a bound to their normal state, and she was vividly conscious that her LORD was there. The voice that had sounded, years before, in her poor, sinful, demon-ridden soul, and had chased away her tormentors, could never be mistaken. In a moment she is at His feet, her whole soul going out to Him in that one cry, "Rabboni!" Amazement, delight, intense love, utter devotion, perfect peace, concentrated in one word, "Master."

The beautiful narrative culminates here. It is brimful of instruction. Oh that we could draw out and drink deeply of this well of life! Let us see if we can learn some few lessons suitable for ourselves.

All through GOD'S revelation of Himself to man we notice that, on momentous occasions, He calls His own by name. At the beginning He left Adam to give names to all the animals, but He Himself gave him his name. After the Fall He called him by his name, when, sin-stricken, he was hiding himself. Abraham, Isaac, Israel, the channels of His grace and providence, are specially named by GOD, and repeatedly called by name by the voice of GOD. When He would assure Moses of His special favour and protection, He could say nothing more convinc-

ing than this, "I know thee by name." And in the New Testament whole volumes of lore are wrapped up in our LORD'S use of the names of His servants —Peter, Lazarus, Zacchæus, Thomas, down to Saul on the Damascus road. And when all the good purposes of GOD to man blossomed into maturity, in the Church of CHRIST, that which had been the peculiar privilege of a few leaders of men, a few saints, became the common prerogative of every Christian child. That which so many righteous men longed for, and never had, is the common privilege of every one who, in Holy Baptism, has been new named, new born, adopted as the child of GOD. The Good Shepherd calleth each of the sheep, and each of the lambs of His flock, by name. No one is lost in the crowd of mankind. Each one of us is known to our LORD by name, as if there were no one else. St. Paul, speaking of our knowledge of GOD, corrects himself, and says that we are rather known of GOD.

That risen CHRIST calls us each by name to-day. He has kept a place for each of us. Just as it was that first Easter morning, so now it is dark, and we cannot see CHRIST; but we can hear His voice; His Word speaks to us; His ministers, He says, speak by Him, and He by them; "Faith cometh by hearing," not by seeing. Let us hear His voice, as Mary heard it in the midst of her sorrow and perplexity, in the dim darkness at the grave-side, away from the world, while men slept; and hearing, let our answer be like hers, "Rabboni"—"My Master." We are thrice His—His by the right of Creation; His because He is GOD; and we are His creatures; His again because He bought us with a price, His own priceless Blood; His yet a third time, by our own free choice of His service, at our Confirmation, renewed at each Communion, renewed after every fall, when we have turned again, as from the grave of sin, to the living CHRIST, called mercifully by Him,

and we responding, with a cry like the poor lost sheep whom the shepherd has found, strayed wearied, wounded, half dead.

This mutual calling of the living CHRIST to the dying soul goes on all through life, till a day comes when the worn-out body lies panting out its last sighs, and the spirit stands on the brink of the dark unknown land, ready to go, forced to go, yet knowing not whither it goes, afraid in its utter loneliness. Oh, then, how sweet to hear our name spoken; to hear, out of the darkness, a Voice, never heard before, yet seeming most familiar, compelling trust, making the soul bound with love and hope, as it did that first Easter-day in Mary's amazed breast; how restful to cry "Master," and to plunge trustfully into the shadowy world, knowing that we shall find ourselves at His feet, Who lived and died for us, and Who liveth for evermore!

Second Sunday after Easter.

THE GOOD SHEPHERD.

MINGLED almost inextricably with our LORD'S allegorical description of Himself, in the words, "I am the Door," is that other, "I am the Good Shepherd." The first thought that strikes us as we read the tenth chapter of St. John is the confusion of ideas that is presented to us. "I am the Door of the sheep," He says; "by Me, if any man enter in, he shall be saved." Then, "I am the Good Shepherd; I lay down My life for the sheep." Then, confounding the similitudes, and introducing a third, "He that entereth by the door is the Shepherd of the sheep; to him the porter openeth."

Now, there are two thoughts that will correct these apparent contradictions. First, that no type or symbol can be identical with that which it shadows forth, that it must give but an imperfect representation, and that the resemblance must fail and break down somewhere if it is pressed beyond what it can bear. And then the remembrance of the complex nature of our LORD'S character, which makes Him stand quite alone in the multiplicity of the aspects under which He may be presented. His nature and office are so many-sided that not one, but a variety of symbols must be used to shadow forth, in any degree of completeness, what He is in Himself, and what He is to His people.

He is at once, then, the Door, the Porter, the Shepherd, the Fold, the Sheep, the Lamb; just as

He is at the same time Priest and Sacrifice, Saviour and Judge, in earth and in heaven, perfect Man and perfect GOD. It is the fact of the Incarnation that gives rise to all these confusions, and it is the Incarnation alone that can reconcile and explain them, so far, at least, as they can be explained to human faculties.

As regards the fitness of the occasion of this allegory, it may have been that our LORD wished to compare Himself with the rulers of the Jewish Church. They were, by their office, called to be shepherds of the people; but they had just cast out of the synagogue the poor man whose birth-blindness our LORD had healed, and whose only fault was that he had faith to know the chief Shepherd's voice, and to follow Him when He called.

But be this as it may; those who heard Him would have no difficulty in fully understanding the force and significance of the term of which He made use. It was a distinct claim to be acknowledged as the CHRIST of GOD. Their Scriptures were full of prophecies of a Ruler Who should be truly the Shepherd of the people, truly the Good Shepherd. It was a recognised title of MESSIAH. It is not necessary to quote the redundant words of prophecy, from Moses to David, and from David to Zechariah, nor to enumerate typical forerunners of our LORD who were themselves actually shepherds—Abel, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, David, and the rest. Besides, this same idea, this expectation of, and yearning desire for, a good and faithful ruler of men and of the world, was not confined to the Israelites. Everywhere men groaned under the ills of life and the tyranny of wickedness, and set up kings, and gave them honour and power, in the hope that they would remedy the evils of the world, and be the representatives of GOD upon earth and true shepherds of men.

Homer's title for his king is this very word, "Shep-

herd of the people." All who have read history will know how bitterly mankind has had to repent of this trust in princes; how truly most of these crowned shepherds have showed themselves to have been that which our LORD calls them, "hirelings," who cared for themselves, not for the flock; or "thieves and robbers;" nay, even "wolves," that tore and devoured the sheep.

But now the Good Shepherd comes. Yet not as mankind imagined. He taught that the ruler should be the servant of his people; that, instead of thriving on their misery, he should suffer to make them prosperous. No regal state, but poverty and lowliness were His chosen lot. His crown was of thorns; His robe, His own Blood; His priceless regalia, His Wounds; His realm, the secret places of the heart; His sheep, those who were like Himself; His triumph, laying down His life in shame and pain; His Throne, the Cross.

This had been foretold. Prophets tell it all, over and over again; the lives of His typical ancestors prefigured in action the same strange destiny of trouble, shame, rejection, pain, and death. But the keepers of these records were dull of heart; they could not understand that which they guarded so jealously and read so continually.

What wonder, then, that when He came, of Whom Law and Prophets and Psalms told, they knew Him not? What wonder that, when He spoke these significant words, they understood not the parable, and some of them even said, "He hath a devil, and is mad; why hear ye Him?"

And is it not so still? "Despised, and rejected of men." Alas! these words are always true. Instead of following the Good Shepherd, men stop to argue about Him. As if the sheep were the Shepherd's equals, and could understand Him and His great thoughts and wonderful ways; as if beauty were dis-

covered by a process like chemical analysis, which can but destroy the thing of beauty ; or as if we learned to love and trust and follow men by something that is most like a *post-mortem* examination ! Or they wander off elsewhere, "every man his own way."

But to whom, to what, will they go ? Where will they find a better master ? Where will they find that which will satisfy their wants, if His pastures are rejected ? Have not those, even, who have deliberately set themselves to deny His pretensions, yet come to the conclusion at last that He was the greatest of men, the greatest who has ever come, and that no greater is ever to be expected ? Do we not see every day the miserable results of the service of other masters ? Look into this poor world to-day ; mark the miseries of men and women ; see the degradation, the suffering, the cruelties, the weary disappointment ; and then say what of all this does not arise from the rejection of the Good Shepherd, and from the following of thieves and robbers. What of all this would not be made right at once if only men, rich and poor, great and small, young and old, would but return to the "Shepherd and Bishop of their souls" ?

Yet why talk of others ? Let each one look at himself. Does not the Church put the right words into our mouths when we are bidden to kneel down, as soon as we come into church, and say, "We have erred and strayed from Thy ways like lost sheep" ? Is there not, so to say, not one lost sheep, but a whole stupid, wandering flock in each of our hearts ? And what good have we got by it ? Has it not always been best with us when we have been following the Good Shepherd ? Have not trouble and sorrow and disappointment found us out when we went our own way instead ? We thought His way was hard, and so we shirked it ; but has not our own way proved harder after all ? Oh ! truly does He call Himself the "Good" Shepherd. There is none

good but He. On His Throne of Glory His goodness would not let Him rest; love and pity brought Him down, and made Him one of us.

Notice that He does not call Himself the "true" Shepherd, as He calls Himself elsewhere "the true Bread," "the true Vine," "the true Life," "the true Witness;" but "the Good" Shepherd. He is not merely the duly appointed Shepherd of mankind, Who is just, and does only right; but He is Good, that is, merciful, loving, self-sacrificing, not standing upon His rights, but stooping to meet human infirmities, as the shepherd is pitiful over the inferiority and the dumb helplessness of the sheep; fulfilling all that Isaiah had foretold in that wonderful fifty-third chapter.

The Shepherd became Himself a Sheep; one with us, in nature, sympathy, heart; a dumb, shorn, suffering Sheep; a wounded, bleeding, dying, sacrificed Lamb, taking away the sin of the world. And yet—oh, blessed confusion of ideas!—always the Good Shepherd, leading, guiding, feeding, guarding, seeking the lost, knowing and calling each by name, bearing in His arms the weak, the young, the weary, the wounded. Each one He knows and follows ever with His sleepless eye. "To Him all hearts are open, all desires known." Rulers of men, even the best-intentioned, can but deal with masses; and so individuals suffer, and are not known, and cannot be helped. But His attributes are infinite. He is the Shepherd, the Good Shepherd; but He is also "I am," and so He is present in all times, in all places, with all hearts. His care for others does not hinder His caring for me at the same moment. His attention cannot be distracted. He is GOD as well as Man. The last makes Him perfect in all sympathies; the first makes Him almighty, omnipresent. And the sheep are His very own, bought with a great price—Himself, His life, His death. And so when but one wanders He cannot rest till He seeks it,

and finds it, and bears it home rejoicing, though He be wearied, and wounded with the thorns and briars, which our sins have caused to grow.

What wonder that this character of the Saviour gave the first idea to Christian art? In the Catacombs, on walls, on lamps, on seals, the primitive Christians loved to depict the Good Shepherd. Yet how strangely He was at that time leading them, His sheep, out into the very midst of the wolves! But was it not well? He was but taking them by the way of the Cross. They were but following Him, and being made like Him. The shortest way to the green pastures and living waters lay through those rough places. The human owner of sheep keeps them for his own profit; their fleece and their flesh bring him a good return for his labour; but CHRIST gains nothing from us. He gives His life, Himself; but He takes nothing from us, for we have nothing to give Him. He does not shear or slay the sheep, but He Himself is stripped and emptied for them, and He lays down His life for them.

So there seems to be so much waste in His ways with men. So there seem to be hard lots and mysterious providences; but He doeth all things well, and His own will see it all some day. Wherever He calls them, He has Himself been; nay, He Himself is, and they need fear no evil. He calls them, that they may know His voice at the first resurrection, when the sheep shall be divided from the goats. And then, for evermore, He, the Shepherd, the Lamb, "shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters," and GOD shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.

But we must make an end. And oh, what poor words have these been, to express the wonders and depths of this revelation of our LORD, "I am the Good Shepherd"! Well did even the angel-souled St. Bernard give up in despair the attempt to tell,

even in his sweet verses, the praises of JESUS. Well did He appeal to the silent testimony of the loving hearts of His true disciples, His dumb, following, listening sheep. For they only know Him; and they know Him, as He knows the Father, by that knowledge which is rooted in mutual love, and evidenced and built up by mutual sacrifice.

Third Sunday after Easter.

THE LOSS OF OPPORTUNITIES.

THE little that is told us of our LORD'S life on earth makes us long very much to know more. Doubtless the Christians of the first age knew much more than we know. The apostles, the holy women, and others would hand down to the next generation the wonderful experiences they had had, the words they had heard, the miracles they had witnessed ; and, as St. Luke tells us, many wrote memoirs of these interesting particulars. The inspired narratives of the four Evangelists were from the first regarded with pre-eminent reverence, as the only authentic record of CHRIST'S life, words, and deeds, and all other reminiscences, however valuable they may have been, were lightly esteemed, in comparison with the divine books of the Four. When persecution arose there was a strict search made for all books and writings of the Christians, and all that could be found were relentlessly destroyed.

So it is, then, that we are left in tantalising ignorance of that wonderful and mysterious period between the Resurrection and the Ascension. For forty days the risen CHRIST remained in the world, apparently showing Himself only to His apostles and immediate friends, giving instruction on the fundamental principles and essential practices of His Church, which were, for the most part, handed on by tradition, without being committed to writing. The Apostles' Creed, the Baptism of Infants, the Liturgy

for the celebration of Holy Communion every Lord's Day, the appointment of that day itself as the Christian's day of worship, the method of Ordination for the perpetual continuance of His Ministry,—these seem to have been some of the matters upon which our LORD instructed His apostles during the great forty days, besides an exposition of the prophecies of Himself in the Old Testament Scriptures. He was, as it were, weaning them from dependence upon His personal guidance, fitting them to stand and act alone, and to build up others in the faith, when they had been strengthened and confirmed by the gift of the HOLY GHOST at Pentecost. He had told them before, "Me ye have not always." He had said that the time would come when they would feel like orphans, and would long to see one of the days when He had been with them. They must have remembered His words, and painfully felt their truth, during this period which we are now commemorating in the Church's year. They must have learned the value of their LORD'S presence, when it had been almost entirely withdrawn. They must have regretted many a lost opportunity, finding, as every one finds, that opportunity missed never returns ; for—

"Who will not take, when once 'tis offered,
Shall never find it more."

Now, should we not, in accordance with the Church's method, try and enter into the thoughts of the period in which we find ourselves, and learn the lesson that is at the moment specially set before us ? Is it not true of us, as of CHRIST'S first disciples, that He is not always with us ? Do not opportunities come and go, and are they used or lost by each one of us ? We have just passed through the seasons of Lent, Passion-tide, and Easter. Have they not been spiritual opportunities ? Has not CHRIST offered Himself to us ? Has He not, as it were, gone in

and out among us? The Church has bidden us give more time to religious thought, to communion with our LORD, to preparation for death and judgment, and for that life beyond the grave, of which we know so little, but which we must certainly experience, and which may be upon us any day. And now those seasons have gone—gone for ever. They have left their mark upon us, and have borne good fruit that will abide with us in our spiritual life for ever; or they have been lost, their opportunity wasted, and some blessings, that might have been ours through the good use of these days, have been missed, and can now never be offered to us again.

We ought to think in this way. Many persons evidently do not so think. They let Christian seasons pass by unused. CHRIST comes into His House, and meets the two or three who come; and then He goes away, and the rest care not. It is strange and sad that so few seem to understand the Church's system; that so few feel inclined to learn more of CHRIST at her feet; that so few are drawn towards Him and His House by love and choice. For here is the real cause of neglect of Services and means of grace; it is simply want of liking for them; want of love for Him to Whom they bring us near. It is not want of time. People have time enough always for anything they wish to do, or feel they ought to do. Indisposition is made light of, when pleasure invites, but many are "indisposed" to come to church in more senses than one.

No doubt the miserable system with which Dissent has familiarised us has its influence upon Church-people. The modern sects have lost all idea of worship; their idea of Christianity is listening to sermons; they think that the arousing of some sort of religious sentiment on Sunday, some excitement of feelings, some tacit assent to good expressions and Christian experiences to which they listen, is

all that is necessary. They have reduced religion to a minimum, and thus manage to secure nearly the whole of their time and thoughts and interest to business, or pleasure, or idleness.

A system is always suspicious that has the indulgence of nature's weaknesses on its side. CHRIST came to raise us above nature; to give us a higher rule of life; to link us more closely to the spiritual world. The Church's system exacts more of us than the easier and merely human systems of those who have dissented from her. The rule of the Church is the rule of CHRIST; a lower rule cannot be safe. In religion the new is wrong; the old alone is right and true. The Book of the Acts tells us how the primitive believers constantly met together in prayer, worship, and Holy Communion. The Epistles show the same. The system of the Church has been the same in every age and in all countries. Is it not perilous to set aside all this uninterrupted practice, that can be traced up to the time of those whom CHRIST taught with His own lips, and to prefer to it the easy-going inventions of self-constituted teachers in this degenerate age, who tell us practically that CHRIST was wrong, that we need not "strive to enter into the strait gate," nor "take up the Cross daily," nor fear when we find ourselves upon the "broad way," because there are so many walking self-satisfied upon it.

An apostle warns us against those who try to persuade people to follow them by "promising them liberty." We should be suspicious, then, of those who claim to be more free than the Church and the Bible; and who seem to have no rules to follow, no obligations to consider; whose religious duties make no demand upon their time or their purse, and do not in any way interfere with their convenience, their comfort, or their pleasure.

If the "burden" of CHRIST is never felt, we may

presume it has never been taken up. If the Cross never stands in our way, and bars us from something that mere human nature makes us desire, we have reason to fear that we are strangers to it, and to Him Who bore it, and bade us follow in His steps. An apostle warns us against "forsaking the assembly of ourselves together." CHRIST promises to meet us when we come to His House for common prayer. If, like Thomas, we stay away, we miss Him and His blessing of peace. If churches are shut from Sunday to Sunday, the fault lies with the clergy; but if churches are open daily, and means of grace and spiritual aid are abundant, then those who have the opportunity, and will not use it, must answer to GOD, and give Him their reasons for making light of that which others would gladly use, if they had the offer. To whom much is given, of them will much be required. We have but a short time to live, and we have much to do in that time. It will not be long before we shall be lying on our deathbed, with all our life upon us, and the Tribunal looming up before us, at which we shall be examined as to our use of GOD'S most precious gifts, life, health, knowledge, grace.

Oh, let us think sometimes, now, in our time of health and strength, of leisure and opportunity, of that solemn hour that must surely come to each one of us, when we are going out of this world to meet our Judge! Let us picture ourselves, as we have seen others, lying on our dying-bed, with failing strength and gasping breath, too weak to pray, without power to think or speak; and then let us consider how we shall then look back upon prayers neglected, Communions that might have been made and were not, preparation for that time of sorest need, which might have been so easily arranged, and was not. It is a practice with many godly persons to have special times for thought of and preparing for their last hours; to anticipate that dread moment, and to

intercede with their LORD, that, when they can no longer call upon Him, He will remember the prayers they uttered while they had the power to pray, and that by His blessed angels, or by His own spiritual presence, He will succour and help them then, when no human aid can touch them, and they are powerless even to help themselves.

When we set off on a long journey, we like to prepare for it some time before; for we know that the commonest feeling at last is, that something has been forgotten, something left behind, something left undone. Shall we not, then, resolve to offer every day a special prayer for GOD'S grace that we may be ready when we are called to make that journey to the unseen land, from which there is no return, and for that moment when no mistakes or omissions or forgetfulness can possibly be rectified? Alas, what spendthrifts of time there are! How many have to say, in bitter sorrow,—

“I wasted time, and now doth time waste me.”

Our little life is so soon gone; and yet we take such small heed of days and moments, as if we had unlimited store to draw upon:—

“But though we sleep, or wake, or roam, or ride,
Aye fleeth the time ; it will no man abide.”

Nor is this all. It is not merely that time passes quickly, but that each day, each hour, has its appointed work and opportunity, and that missed, it can never be recovered. Of how many may it be said, as it was once said of a celebrated man, “He loses half-an-hour every morning, and runs after it during the rest of the day, without being able to overtake it”?

When we hear the church-bell; when the Holy Communion is offered to us; when we may pray quietly; when our hearts are warmed and stirred within us, let us remember our LORD'S words, “Me

ye have not alway." When we feel He is with us, let us keep Him, and secure some help, some blessing, from Him. He has come to give us something we need. The moment and its blessing will pass away together, if we do not secure them then and there.

When Jerusalem knew not the day of her visitation, JESUS wept over it; but He did not give her another day. When the foolish virgins wept and bewailed their folly, the door was not opened. GOD is always merciful, but our time of receiving His mercy is short, and is soon past. It was only because the two disciples at Emmaus "constrained" Him that He tarried with them. It was only because Jacob would not let the Holy One go that He blessed him. It is often "now or never" in spiritual matters, as in temporal concerns. The tide must be taken at its flood, or all our life is spoiled by quicksands:—

" Miss not the occasion. By the forelock take
That subtle power, the never-halting time,
Lest a mere moment's putting off should make
Mischance almost as heavy as a crime."

Do we ever think of this, that GOD, Who gives us other gifts with such prodigal liberality, dispenses time to us moment by moment? The last moment is withdrawn before the present moment is given, and we can never be certain of the third. The past is gone; the future may never be ours; it is the present only that is our own, and in that everything is wrapped up. "Now is the day of salvation." "Lost wealth may be restored by industry; the wreck of health may be regained by temperance; forgotten knowledge may be restored by study; alienated friendships may be smoothed into forgetfulness; even forfeited reputation may be won back by penitence and virtue; but who ever looked upon his vanished hours, recalled his slighted years, or effaced from heaven's record the fearful blot of wasted time?"

Fourth Sunday after Easter.

THE MINISTRY OF THE HOLY GHOST CONVINCING OF SIN.

CHRIST died for the world ; but His personal ministry was only for a short time, to a few persons, and over a small area. The ministry of the HOLY GHOST is to all persons, and through all ages till the end of the world. Till He came at Pentecost the apostles remained at Jerusalem with closed lips. When He came upon them with power they began to speak and to work ; they went forth to all nations, to preach CHRIST, repentance, faith, salvation.

That work is going on now. That ministry of the HOLY GHOST is in our midst. Ordination is the receiving of the HOLY GHOST for the work of the ministry. The HOLY GHOST comes not to the world as CHRIST came, as one sinless Man, but He comes speaking by many tongues, and those the tongues of sinful men. His message to the world is to convict it of sin, to prove GOD holy and man sinful, to point to the Saviour of sinners, and to bow hearts in loving obedience to Him.

Great has been the company of the preachers ; great has been the harvest of souls. We shudder sometimes at the sight of the world's rejection of GOD ; let us rejoice sometimes at the thought of the victories of the HOLY GHOST. They began with the preaching of Peter, when three thousand souls were gathered into the fold. They have never ceased. They are going on still. Very varied indeed are the outward circumstances, the experiences, the histories,

of all those souls. Yet in one respect all are alike. In each one the work of the HOLY GHOST has been felt, convincing of sin. JESUS CHRIST came to save "sinners." It is the lost who are saved. All indeed are sinners, but all are not "convinced of sin." The HOLY GHOST strives with all and with each, but some harden their hearts against Him, and so their sin remaineth. Oh, lamentable victory—to conquer the loving Spirit of GOD, calling the sinful soul to pardon and salvation! Oh, what loss is the only gain of such labour! It can be done, and it is done by many. A sense of sin is instinctive, and yet that sense may be thwarted, till it is crushed and stamped out.

This is what is meant, perhaps, by the heathen rising up in the Judgment to condemn the civilised and refined. All over the heathen world, whether ancient or modern, there is the ordinance of sacrifice, the offering of life, the shedding of blood, the universal confession of conscience-stricken man that he is guilty before GOD. All the strange ceremonies of expiation, all the cruel inflictions of self-torture of devotees, all these things are the instinctive acts of men whose conscience tells them that GOD is holy, and that man is sinful. These things are full of degrading superstition, and yet their foundation is a great truth. The truth is perverted, but it is still true; and GOD'S revelation, clearing away the accretions of man's traditions, displays again the fundamental truths, that GOD is holy, and that man is sinful.

The nineteenth century European smiles at all this, and putting away with contemptuous impetuosity the superstitions, he sweeps away with them the great fundamental truth from which they grew. His pride lifts him up; his ignorance degrades GOD, and makes him irreverent and familiar with GOD; just as some ill-bred upstart tries to be on equal terms with his betters, and only succeeds in being impertinent and ridiculous. Thus one says, "What educated man feels anything in his nature repugnant to or requiring

reconciliation with GOD?" To this, then, the pride of civilisation leads men! We say, "How clever we are in this nineteenth century! What discoveries we make! What wonderful progress! How far advanced in knowledge and skill, beyond our ancestors, beyond the poor ignorant heathen and barbarous people!"

Well, be it so. But what then? Does all this alter our relation to the Great GOD? Does it bring us one step nearer to Him? Does it help us to know Him any better, or give us any rights of familiarity or equality? Say you can analyse the sun and weigh the planets; what has your discovery taught you but the vastness of Creation, and your own littleness? Go out alone on some starry night, and in the silence look up at the host of suns whose distance is so enormous that no skill of yours can measure it; pile thought upon thought as to ages of time, millions of miles of space, boundless variety, infinite number, endless novelty, and what must be the end but the conviction of your own insignificance? Oh, poor little thinking being! A creeping speck even upon this world of ours; and this little world itself so tiny, and this our solar system itself so small, compared with marvellous gigantic systems that GOD has given thee the skill just to discover!

What is the next thought but this—What must GOD be, Who made all this, Who holds it in His hands, and orders and rules all and each, the infinite whole and the tiniest item, down to the minute creature that the microscope alone can show us! Yet with that Great GOD thou hast to do. He gave thee being; He gave thee reason and conscience; He gave thee a rule of right and wrong; and He will call thee to account for all. Yes; and with all this He gave thee a deep inner conviction of responsibility to GOD. Men may strive against it, forget it, smother it up, hurry it aside with present business or pleasure; but it is inextinguishable; it clings to man, side by side with

life itself. Man must degrade himself to be less than an animal, to be a mere thing, before he can persuade himself that he is not responsible personally to a personal GOD.

And with this sense of responsibility there comes the sense of sin. The perfections of GOD force upon us the conviction of our imperfections. The soul looks upward, through the vast vista of created things and beings to GOD, the Maker and LORD of all, and it feels the irresistible attraction of that mighty power, drawing it on alone, amidst countless spectators, to the very presence of Him Who sits unseen in His greatness and purity ; and it is covered with shrinking, cowering shame, with deep, shuddering fear. The sense of littleness is overwhelming, but the sense of impurity overcomes even this ; the awful consciousness of sin, wrapping the soul round, penetrating even to its centre, mingling itself inextricably with its very essence and being.

It is not so much the remembrance of particular sins ; it is not necessarily the guilt of some great sin ; but it is the sense of sinfulness, of uncleanness, of unfitness by nature for the sight and presence of GOD, Whose purity is so awful. It is the purity of GOD that fills the hosts of heaven with wonder and praise. When St. John saw the occupations of the blessed, he tells us that the glorious spirits, who know what GOD is so intimately by their vast powers and by constant contemplation, select this attribute for never-ceasing praise. It is not GOD'S power, or His greatness, or even His love, that they so incessantly sing of, but His purity. "Holy, Holy, Holy ;" this ceases not day and night ; it surrounds the Throne of GOD eternally, like the light itself.

It is this sense of GOD'S holiness, and of man's sin, that the ministry of the HOLY GHOST is designed to intensify, to direct aright, and to set at rest, with the soothing certainty of pardon. Over and above the natural sense of sin, it teaches man what sin is

by a fuller knowledge of what GOD is, of what GOD requires of us, and by the display of the perfect Man CHRIST JESUS. It teaches the extreme sinfulness of sin by holding up the Cross, and showing what it cost to redeem the soul from sin. It guards us from fanatical self-torture by showing us the perfect work of CHRIST the Saviour; it bids us confess our sinfulness, and come to the fountain of the Precious Blood and wash and be clean and pardoned. It shows us how sin may be overcome, and temptation resisted, and the holy human life of CHRIST imitated, and how the soul's rest and home may be attained near its Maker and GOD.

But the first step in all this is the conviction of sin. Nay, however high the soul may attain in the way of holiness, this conviction must ever abide. Even the highest saint's lifelong utterance is this, "My sin is ever before me." Men are not divided into saints and sinners, but into sinners who know their sins, and sinners who are ignorant of them. All are sinners in GOD'S sight; but some are sinners in their own sight, and some are not. It is those who confess their sins who are forgiven. All are sinners, but some are pardoned sinners, and some are not pardoned. An abiding sense of sin results in a constant use of all means of grace, an unceasing turning to CHRIST, a daily return to the fountain of the Precious Blood, a continual crying, "Wash me yet more and more from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin." The thought is never really absent. It underlies the claims of work; it is there amidst the hours of pleasure. The HOLY GHOST abides in the hearts of the faithful, and keeps ever alive the conviction of sin, and secures its pardon. The soul wherein He dwells and works is open ever towards GOD and heaven; communication never ceases; prayer ascends; pardon and grace descend ever; and when death comes, and the soul is free, it speeds away by irresistible instinct upwards towards GOD.

Fifth Sunday after Easter.

WHAT "THE WORLD" MEANS FOR US TO-DAY.

WHAT a strange thing it was for our LORD to say, "I have overcome the world"! What a strange time to say it! He was at the end of His life, and His life seemed nothing but a failure. He had lived for thirty years in an obscure village, in a conquered and despised province of the Roman Empire, a working-man, unknown to fame, never having been many miles from home. Then for three years He had been a Teacher. He had persuaded a few of His fellow-working-men to join Him; He attracted large numbers of the common people at times; but all the educated, all the influential men of His country rejected His pretensions. Within an hour or two one of His few followers was going to give Him up to the authorities; and within twenty-four hours He would die a shameful death, execrated by all. Yet, knowing all things that should come upon Him, He says, "I have overcome the world"!

"Overcome the world;"—that is just what His nation wanted Him to do. They were chafing under the iron heel of Rome; they were reading their prophets' utterances; they were impatiently looking for their MESSIAH, Who was to fulfil the magnificent destiny of Israel's seed, and make all kings bow before Him, all nations do Him service. "Overcome the world;"—what can the words mean? We think of Alexander the Great, of Cæsar, of Attila, of Napoleon,

and a few more ; but there is not the smallest resemblance between the career of such men and that of CHRIST. Mahomet and his successors went a long way towards conquering the world, and the Moslem teachers still maintain that the mighty work will yet be accomplished by the expected Mahdi, sword in hand. But CHRIST would have no sword drawn for Him. Once He received the offer of the world's sovereignty, and He refused it. Anti - Christian writers tell us that He was deluded ; that, like many enthusiasts, He was led away by phantasies ; that the event proved that He was but human, and had made a mistake, like many would-be leaders of men before and since.

But was this so ? Look on a little more than a century. Great Rome is in alarm at the spread of Christianity. Persecution has tried hard to stamp it out, but it has spread and increased notwithstanding. A Christian writer of that age says : " We are but of yesterday ; but we are found everywhere ; in the army, in the senate, in town and country, in the capital, and in the far-off provinces where Rome can hardly enforce her authority."

Look on again a century or two. The Roman armies are marching beneath their standards as before, but those standards are surmounted now by the Cross ! The magnificent marble temples of the gods still stand, but they are deserted, and Emperors are dedicating churches to the worship of CHRIST.

Look on again a few more centuries. All over Europe bells are knolling from ten thousand steeples ; the civilised world is studded thickly with noble cathedrals, stately abbeys, village churches, communities of men or of women in lonely retreats day and night praying and singing praises to CHRIST. A cry goes up that the land where His feet walked is desecrated by unbelievers, and forthwith men leave home, kings cease to fight, and all the chivalry

of Europe streams away to rescue Bethlehem, Nazareth, Jerusalem, from the enemies of CHRIST.

Nor is this all. CHRIST and His Cross are everywhere ; in court of justice His name is the most binding force in the oath. Upon the King's crown the Cross is wrought in jewels ; and high and low sign themselves with the symbol, in church and at home. The finest building in city and in hamlet is a church. The greatest men of the land are bishops. The religion of CHRIST is everywhere. The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdom of GOD and of His CHRIST. He has "overcome the world."

But it will be said, "All this has passed away. If this was what CHRIST meant, He was mistaken after all. The world has overcome Him now, and calls those times the 'Dark Ages ;' and rejoices now in liberty and light, and promises itself yet more complete enfranchisement from Christian trammels and superstitions."

It may be so. There are prophetic words of His that seem to imply the possibility of this. At one time in His human life and personal ministry it looked as if He were going to be accepted by the little world of Abraham's race. Then they rejected Him, and put Him to death ; but the result was wider dominion, higher honour, a better knowledge of His glories, the adoration of millions of loving souls of Him as their Saviour, their LORD, and their GOD. What if all this be repeated on the wider, grander field of the world at large ? If CHRIST has been born now, not at Bethlehem, but in every city and town and village in the civilised world, is it to be that He shall be crucified, not at Jerusalem only, but in ten thousand places, that once hailed Him King and called Him Blessed ? If so, shall there not be also a triumph after humiliation, a triumph proportionately greater than that which Christendom once saw ? Is there, then, yet a more magnificent fulfilment to come.

of those words of His, "I have overcome the world"? This world is, after all, but a grain of dust in the universe; does the CHRIST speak not of this world only, but of the Cosmos, the boundless realm of His created system, the countless centres of order and beauty, of life perhaps, and thought and love, that the heavens nightly declare to us, and which science is explaining and revealing little by little, till we hold our breath, amazed, bewildered, and dumb?

But we are getting out of our depth. Let us return to something more practical. Our LORD tells us that, as He was, so are we in the world. We too, then, must say, as He said, "I have overcome the world." And His disciples have said it. Those who followed Him learned how to do it. Look at St. Paul at the end of his career; how like his Master he appears!—a wonderful life; great success; great failure. It is CHRIST over again. And, like CHRIST, the Apostle, at the end of his mission, speaks great, hopeful, triumphant words, and is sure of the victor's crown. The world had done its worst, but it had not crushed the Apostle; he too could say, "I have overcome the world."

Time would fail if we tried to speak of but examples of those who, in every age since, have gone the same way and have come to the same end. Take one—Savonarola, noble reformer, brave, selfless Christian man, like his LORD, seeming for a time to conquer, and then borne down by the world, and done to death; the world at its worst, so like the Jewish world that hated and murdered CHRIST; a vile Pope, guilty of every crime, yet clothed with power, doing damnable deeds in the name of GOD; these set themselves against the man, and they seemed to triumph. But was it so? That poor friar, mounting the gallows-ladder, excommunicated by the Church which he loved, howled at by the mob, ridiculed by fine ladies and gentlemen, his ears hearing for their last earthly

sound the coarse gibes of the brutal executioner, who made fun of him as he stood upon the ladder with him, till people cried "Shame!" Was that man's heart vanquished? His body was at the mercy of injustice in power; his plans were upset; but could the wicked world crush him? Was not the man all the while free, at rest, unbroken, triumphant? He knew he was right; he held firmly on his way to the last. The world had not conquered him, though it had crushed him. No, it was the other way; he could say, "I have overcome the world."

But let us come nearer home still. What is "the world"? It is man without GOD; man against GOD. It is human nature, best and worst, without the supernatural. It is men and women of this or any age, who own no higher law than their own wishes, their own will; who fear no master but human authority; who love themselves more than any other being, seen or unseen.

The world has its maxims and unwritten rules of conduct. These are some of them: "Failure is deserving of contempt and punishment;" "Poverty is the greatest of crimes;" "Being found out is the greatest evil;" "Wealth is the greatest good;" "A man is a fool who does not get all the enjoyment he can;" "Public Opinion is the test of right and wrong;" "Every man has his price;" "Those who pretend to be better than their neighbours are hypocrites;" "One must go with the tide, and do as others do." And there are plenty more of a similar kind.

Then there is what is called "the way of the world." See the world's favourite of the moment: a general who has won a victory; a claptrap orator who promises the mob all kinds of good things, who shows up abuses, and tries to prove every one but himself to be a liar and a cheat; an actor;

a singer ; a dancer ; a preacher ; the inventor of a medicine ; a newspaper writer. It matters not who it is. Popular fancy lauds the individual to the skies. But presently the tide turns. Some one else has caught the fancy of the day, and the idol of yesterday is flung into a dust-heap to-day.

Look at that man ; he is rich ; he got his money by lucky speculation, or hard dealing, or what might be called, if things had their plain, proper names, dishonesty ; but the world does not mind ; and it bows down and worships him and his money. Take another, who has climbed up to high place. Perhaps money did it ; perhaps flattery ; perhaps some backstairs bargaining ; perhaps some dirty work that was useful to those who had power and patronage. What matter ? The great man will be fawned upon, flattered, belauded, simply because he is what he is.

Look at what is called "the man of the world." He is gracious and deferential to rank and wealth ; overbearing and insolent to those in inferior position ; he is selfish, self-indulgent, sensual ; he will stoop to almost any meanness to gain his end ; persevering, scheming, cringing, till he gets what he wants ; and then he will turn round and ignore his friend, especially if he asks for help in his turn. He can suit his manners to his company ; be all courtesy to this woman, and ruin that other, without the smallest scruple. He does not believe in the existence of a higher rule of life, and thinks himself as good as the rest of the world, or better.

These are some of the characteristics of "The World," as it is now, as it was in our LORD'S day, as it always has been and will be. Of this our LORD declared Himself the enemy. This, He said, would be the enemy of His true servants to the end. Do not we know by our own experience that it is so ? Is there not something that keeps us

back from being consistent Christians ; that drags us down, and shames us out of our better thoughts, and makes us afraid, and procrastinating in undertaking improvement ; that drives away high and generous and noble aspirations, and makes us follow the fashion and custom of the moment, though we despise ourselves for it ? It is not the motions of our own heart, the impulses of our bodies, which the Bible describes by the word "the flesh." It is not some external impulse, coming into our souls when no one is near, and which GOD'S Word attributes to the temptation of "the Devil" and his spirits. We surely have by this time learned that that third enemy of the soul, which our LORD calls "The World," is a reality, and one that has often faced us and lifted its armed hand and wounding weapons against us.

And yet this saying of CHRIST'S is to be ours also — "I have overcome the world." Yes ; and thank GOD, in spite of many failures and falls, can we not say it ? Have we not many and many a time overcome "The World"? Have we not acted on principles opposite to those which we have described ? Has not "The World" done its best and its worst, and yet we have followed the rule of CHRIST, and resisted and overcome the World's rule and the World's practice ?

It is the smiles of the World that are more dangerous than its frowns. When a man is down ; when he is poor, or has been cheated, or passed over unjustly ; when he is old and soured, and life has lost most of its attractions for him, it is common enough to hear the World abused and called by opprobrious names. In the early Christian ages, when the World meant the Roman Empire and heathen civilisation, the line was sharply drawn, and Christians could see plainly enough that the World's ways and their ways diverged widely, and

they could understand our LORD'S saying, that the World's friends could not be His friends. But things are changed now. All is changed, except the words of CHRIST ; and they cannot change. It is still, therefore, the Christian's duty to renounce the World at his baptism, and to resist and overcome the World all his life after to the very end.

The World's policy is to persuade us that it is not our enemy, but our friend. It appeals to our pride, our natural dislike of restraint and dictation, our love of liberty, and all other natural impulses of the flesh and the mind. It has a pleasant way of telling us not to be "too strait-laced;" to be broad and tolerant; to give and take; to turn off awkward dilemmas with a laugh. Are not some of the most agreeable people we know thoroughly worldly ? Is it not hard to stand against their influence, and not to give up our principles and drift away with the tide under their leading ?

In our LORD'S days the World went on its way, following old tracks, scarcely recognising its own unwritten traditions ; but now the World has a literature, a standard and rule of conduct, a chronicle of events, a means of commenting upon and censuring and wounding those who diverge from its prescribed principles. This is the Newspaper. The Newspaper is the modern World's Bible and Prayer-Book, its Catholic Church, its conscience-keeper. It is supposed to lead, but it really follows and represents public opinion. It is the World of the day written down and described and depicted by itself. One may see the World's good side and its bad ; and it is by no means all bad. The World is never altogether bad. Men and women are not altogether bad ; and the World is made up of men and women. The Christian man reads his newspaper like other people, and is none the worse for it. He does not accept all it says for truth ; he does not believe that

the sayings of this obscure person, or that clever pen-driver, are certainly to be accepted because they get into print. He knows that a newspaper is just like a shop, and that much of its stock-in-trade is made to sell, and is not worth having. He has an antidote to the poisonous trash that is palmed off as wholesome food ; he has a standard by which to try plausible statements and theories, for he holds daily communings with Him who is the Truth, and His Word is a lantern to his feet, and His Church is the guide of his heart and his life. The Christian man is not a misanthrope, a pessimist, a sour, self-satisfied despiser of men and things. He can rejoice in the beauty of nature, mountains and rivers, woodlands and pasturage, and the twinkling sea. He can stand, as at this wonderful Spring-tide, and see the tree thrusting forth its ten thousand leaves, and admire and wonder at the bright, green, beautiful thing that is bursting out from the hard, dry wood ; he can take up a hedgerow flower and read in it a sermon about GOD ; he can look up at the blue sky, with its white clouds sailing upon it, and say, "Oh, all ye works of the LORD, bless ye the LORD, praise Him and magnify Him for ever!" He knows that the material world is full of beauty, and he has no quarrel with it. He sits eager and unwearied at the feet of science, and learns all he can of the daily discovered wonders of created things, their order and laws, their long-drawn history, more absorbing and interesting than the most exciting romance. He can love his country too, and is keenly alive to her honour, her prosperity, her progress. He can attend to his daily duties, as a citizen, as a toiler for his bread ; he can be a good son, husband, father ; he can admire men and women who differ from him ; he can meet them brightly and frankly on common ground ; he can see good in every one ; and it is part of his principles to try and make good better,

and to turn bad to good. The Catholic Christian is not a narrow, sanctimonious, acid Puritan, frowning down the bounding joyousness of youth, himself unable to enjoy innocent pleasures and wholesome recreation, and therefore denouncing every man and woman who is not so unnatural and strait-laced as himself. He is not a petty, ignorant sectarian, who can see and care for nothing but his own little paltry chapel, and the insignificant, upstart denomination that did not exist at all a few years ago. His faith is as old as the world. It rests not upon his own poor judgment, nor upon the opinion of this man or that man. He takes CHRIST as his Teacher, and CHRIST'S Church as his guide, and he is quite willing to be ignorant of many things, and to wait for the clearing-up of doubts and difficulties which cannot be solved here and now. So he keeps a steady, straight-onward, upward course, through the world's boisterous, changeful, distracting clamour, like some great ship faring along through the restless waves of the pathless ocean. He may be a plain man, unknown to fame; no leader of men, unrecorded in the annals of great events; but he is lord of himself, and he keeps his heart for his liege LORD above loyally, jealously. The kingdom of GOD has come; His will is done, in that little world. There the LORD is King, be the people never so unquiet. There has been war, but now the Prince of Peace reigns, and He hath put all enemies under His feet. The false principles of life, the shams, the unrealities, the deceits, the miserable heart-aching disappointments, the rebellion against nature, against laws, against GOD, that flood and pervade everything around him, surge and swell, and beat upon him, like the billows that roar and batter upon some cliff that shelters behind it many a fair acre, many a mile of fat land, many a peaceful village; but they cannot move him; they cannot break in;

his heart standeth fast and believeth in his GOD. Not by sword, not by outward and famous victory, but deep within, where the true manhood lies enshrined, there the Christian man gains and maintains the conquest; there, by GOD'S grace and his own strong will, by patience and spiritual aids, he has met all oncomers, all enemies; there he has vanquished them, the strong rebellions of the Flesh, the secret temptations of the Devil; there too he can say, "I have overcome the World."

Sunday after Ascension.

THE GIFTS OF THE GLORIFIED MAN.

THE Ascension of our LORD is the triumph of Humanity. Great things have been said in praise of man's power and dignity, but nothing that has been imagined by non-Christian theorists comes near the magnificent coronation of human nature by the Hand of the Eternal Himself, which the Church proclaims when she declares, "He ascended into heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of GOD the Father Almighty." It would not have been anything wonderful that the Son of GOD should ascend up where He was before ; but the marvel and the glory is that the Man CHRIST JESUS, one of us, a man, with human body, mind, and spirit, should not merely be admitted into the presence of JEHOVAH, but that He should by Him be exalted and honoured, and endowed with power and authority.

The first Adam was made GOD's vicegerent upon earth. The second Adam has received "all power in earth and in heaven." All this is not for Himself, but for us. As He became man for us, lived and died for us, so He has ascended for us ; and the gifts that He has now received are all for us. He told Magdalen at the tomb to wait till He should be ascended, and that then what her love desired should be granted her. He bade the Apostles wait at Jerusalem, and not begin their mission to the

world till He had ascended, and had sent them down gifts to fit them for their work.

Pentecost saw the first bestowal of His gifts—knowledge, love, zeal, self-sacrifice, powers of language, powers of healing, and much more. We speak of these sometimes as if they were divine gifts and powers. Is it not more likely that they were but higher human gifts and powers, the gifts of the glorified Humanity of CHRIST? Do we not, every now and then, see indications of the existence of these powers in men, occult and mysterious manifestations, that ordinary laws of nature do not account for? Can we not believe that in the perfect Man CHRIST JESUS all this, that feebly and fitfully glimmers forth in some men, shone with steady effulgence? Mind and spirit evidently have faculties far beyond those that are commonly exercised. The flesh holds down and hampers the spirit's movements; sinfulness deadens spiritual life; our higher selves lie dormant, atrophied by the overmastering, stupid imbecility of the lower animal nature. In CHRIST all the magnificent endowments of man were found in their fullest perfection. They were not the result of education, culture, training; for He was but a Galilean peasant. They were in Him by virtue of His pure, sinless Humanity; and there was nothing to hinder their exercise, except the laws of matter and the restraints of the flesh. Even under all this, His miracles showed what He possessed; though they seem to have cost Him effort and loss; for He was conscious when healing virtue went out of Him, and the dead exhaustion that we read of was probably the result of His giving forth His power to help the failing powers and faculties of weaker beings.

But when the mortal body was purified, and raised to a higher existence; when His human nature was exalted to its noblest possible condition,

and could bear the full flood of its incoming endowments, then indeed must He have been mighty and wonderful. If in the days of His flesh He could not only do wonders, but impart the gift to others, what must have been His manifold and boundless energy in the time of His exaltation to the right hand of GOD! What must be His ability now to give gifts to men of goodwill, to men ready to receive those gifts!

In point of fact, has not mankind received great and wonderful gifts from its glorified LORD and King! It is the fashion of the day to speak of civilisation and science and progress generally as the result of man's unaided development, but is it not more true, more reverent, more Christian, to look upon all this as the gift of the ascended Son of Man? Do we not forget the innate difference between Christian civilisation and the highest civilisation that preceded it? Look at the old-world empires; man's natural powers produced wonderful results; but if we set them side by side with what has been attained since the Ascension, do we not see a vast difference, both in kind and in degree? In kind; for the principle of ancient civilisation was the advancement of the State and the exaltation of favoured individuals; the principle of Christian civilisation has been and is more and more evidently the good of the greater number, the care and welfare of every individual of the community. In the old world, the business of the Government was war; now, with all our miserable shortcomings, Governments occupy themselves with social questions and the amending of abuses. In degree; for, great as was the advancement of ancient man in knowledge, in art, even in science, it was, after all, the same sort of skill and unity that we see in mere animals—the ants, for instance—while our inventions, our knowledge of the laws of the universe, our power to

enslave the forces of nature for our benefit, are such as the world never before saw, or even imagined.

We forget that all this is post-Christian. The old world, with its attainments, was swept away and utterly blotted out, and a new beginning was made by Christian men; the growth was gradual indeed, the beginning was humble, but we must not forget the difficulty and the importance of the first step. The foundation of the vast and sumptuous building may be rough, and must be hidden; but, after all, everything rests upon it.

Christian missionaries went out into savage Europe, and taught the wild men to worship GOD, instead of worshipping and fearing the powers of nature. They taught them also to sow corn, to make nets, to build houses, to write, and, above all, to think. Is it not reasonable to say that printing and steam and scientific discovery are but the natural developments of these rudimentary efforts? Slavery has been abolished; education extended to all; the condition of woman and child has been raised; the equality of men has been vindicated; national animosities have been kept in check; the weak, the sick, the helpless, have been cared for. Are not these all the gifts of the ascended CHRIST to man, given gradually, and in due order and succession, as men were fitted to receive them; the fulfilling of man's original charter, renewed in the second Adam, "Replenish the earth, and subdue it"?

Our LORD submitted to the ills of human life. He did not, with a word of divine power and authority, put an end to them; but He shows us how, by the gifts which we have already as men, we may reform the world, and do away with most, perhaps all, of the miseries of humanity.

Do not men, in the present day, forget this? Do they not adopt Christian civilisation, and ignore its origin? Do they not praise and admire themselves,

as if they had done all this, while in truth it is all the gift of GOD by His CHRIST? "Not a man in Europe now," said one of the great thinkers of the age, "who talks so bravely against the Church, but owes it to the Church that he can talk at all."

Then there is the due sequel and consequence of all this. The gifts of CHRIST are not to be hoarded, but imparted to others. He received gifts, not for Himself, but for men; we too must hand on what we receive.

Like the widow's oil, these gifts still flow in, so long as vessels are being filled with them. We are but channels of GOD'S bounty. We are stewards of GOD'S gifts. If only we made ourselves fit to receive CHRIST'S manifold gifts, if only we entered fully upon the glorious heritage that is ours in Him, what a wonderful, beautiful, happy world we could make it! We have not, because we ask not; because we do not believe that we can get greater things than these; because we go back to heathen principles, instead of walking upon the higher way that CHRIST has shown us. Every misery, every disease, every evil that yet remains in the world, is a proof that some law of GOD is broken, some gift of GOD not received or not used. What we can do should convince us of what more we might do. As it is now, we make the lame to walk, the blind to see, the dumb to speak; we annihilate time and space; we rend the rocks, and examine the remotest regions of the heavens; we discover the secrets and the laws of nature; we investigate the marvels of earth and air and sea. What could we not do if, instead of wasting time and money and talents upon useless and pernicious things, we duly used GOD'S present gifts, and so made way for more gifts, higher gifts, gifts that now seem impossible, miraculous? Lord Bacon said, even in his day, that man might some day conquer even death itself. Our LORD

did it ; and one of His gifts after His Ascension was this power to His disciples.

But if these temporal and material gifts from the Man CHRIST JESUS are so great, and might be yet so much greater, let us not forget the spiritual gifts from the Son of GOD, which also may be ours. Here and there, all down the ages since CHRIST'S Ascension, there have been CHRIST-like men and women, "saints" we call them, marvellously endowed with graces, instances of the victory of spirit over matter, of the soul over the body, of CHRIST over sin and human frailty. They ought not to be so rare. Such wonders might be common. We might have been something like those holy ones, if we had but made ourselves fit to receive and to use GOD'S gifts, and by them, in due succession, to have gone on to perfection.

Alas ! it is too late for most of us now. We shall at best have but lowly places in the kingdom of our ascended LORD.

But let us at least, now while we may, and as far as we may, use and improve the gifts we have—life, influence, time, money, talents, all else that is ours ; so shall we be happier ourselves, and make some others a little happier, a little better.

Whitsun-Day.

HOW GOD IS A CONSUMING FIRE.

"OUR GOD is a consuming fire." Twice these words occur in the Bible; once in the Old Testament, and once in the New Testament. What do they mean? Were the old heathen nations right after all, for they worshipped fire as the symbol of GOD? Almost all over the world, and in every age, men have turned to the Sun, the great fire, the great source of light and heat to the world, and have adored it as GOD. Were they near a great truth all the time? Yes, surely they were. Almost all errors have some truth in them; many are but the perversion of a truth; some are only a wrong superstructure upon a true foundation. False religions would not last and flourish as they do if there were not a large element of truth in them.

Turn over the pages of the Bible, and see how often GOD uses fire as the symbol of His presence, or the type of His attributes, or the emblem of His working. The Burning Bush; the blazing Sinai; the Pillar of Fire brooding ever over the Tabernacle; the sacrifices burnt upon the altar; the visions of Isaiah, of Daniel, of Ezekiel; the words of Psalms and prophets; the Old Testament is full of such records. And what does the Church tell us to-day? It is Pentecost, the anniversary of the giving of the Law at Sinai, when the mountain burned with fire. But that is passed away; the Epistle to the Hebrews

tells us that we Christians have little or nothing to do with this Mount Sinai, with its fires and thunderings; and yet the Apostle says immediately, "Our GOD is a consuming fire;" and the Church records for us the new Pentecost, and that too, we see, is a day of fire. GOD is near again; GOD manifests Himself; and again, as at the first Pentecost, He manifests Himself by fire—fire searching out each of the faithful, a separate flame lighting upon each head.

These words, then, stand almost as a motto for Whitsuntide, "Our GOD is a consuming fire;" but still we ask, What do they mean? "A consuming fire"! Our first thought is of that destruction. Fire is the great destroyer. What can resist it? A good friend, as it is said, in its governed state, but a terrible enemy when it is master. Does this in any sense apply to GOD? Alas! yes. Many times we read of the fire of GOD breaking out to work vengeance and to destroy. It is terrible to read, yet there the sacred page stands. Sodom and the cities of the plain, Korah and his company, Elijah's enemies, and many more. And the New Testament has worse still to tell us. There is the rich man tormented in the flame, and there are those dreadful haunting words of our LORD, repeated over and over again, of "the fire that is not quenchable," and that revelation of everlasting fire into which the cursed rush at the Great Judgment Day, compelled by the sentence of GOD, and by their own terror and haste to escape from His awful presence.

But fire has other attributes besides that of destruction. It has the very opposite power, the power of giving and sustaining life. The Sun's fires are the source of all the life that is in the world. The very food that we eat burns within us, and so warms us while it nourishes us; and are we not told of GOD that "In Him we live, and move, and

have our being"? He made us; He sustains us every moment; and our LORD says that we must eat Him as Bread, that we may live by Him.

There are two other uses of this symbol. We speak of "fiery zeal;" of the "fire of love;" of "burning hate;" of being "consumed by a passion;" and so on. And can we forget how our LORD said that His "zeal consumed Him"? Can there be greater love than His, that "many waters could not quench"? And what does this day tell us? It tells us of men who had been weak and cold and timid, baptized as on this day with the fire of GOD, and forthwith becoming bold and firm and dauntless, burning with zeal and love, kindling the same warmth in others; like their LORD and Master, as flame is like flame.

We are beginning to see the meaning of those words, "Our GOD is a consuming fire." We are beginning to see their fitness for Whitsun-Day. "Our GOD is a consuming fire." What said our LORD Himself? "I am come to send fire upon the earth, and what will I, if it be already kindled?"

With this GOD we have to do. We cannot escape Him; and He is a "consuming fire." What then? What is He to us? what are we to Him? We dread fire and shrink from it, as something that will hurt us; do we so regard GOD? Is our first and natural thought to keep out of GOD'S way, to be afraid of Him, to dread getting too near to Him, and having too much of Him? It is the first thought, the deep, earnest, passionate, fixed purpose of many. Is it ours? The end of those who so regard GOD is to be taken at their word. They say all their life long to GOD, "Depart from me;" and at last, when He has tried to reconcile them to Himself, and they have still refused, and when now their time of probation has passed away, and there is no hope, then sadly and reluctantly He acquiesces

in their wish, and He too says, "Depart;" and they rush away headlong to that place where GOD is least present, where He is present only as a "consuming fire."

Oh, most awful thought ! Oh, more awful reality ! And then there is another tremendous fact. This lies in our way—the way of each one of us. From this there needs labour to escape. To this the world was doomed by its sin. We feel, each of us, the possible foretaste of this in ourselves. The desire to escape from GOD, this is the sure sign that we are not yet quite saved from that inevitable end of such instincts. Do we feel that instinct ? Do we act upon it, silently, unconsciously, habitually ? Then let us be afraid ; let us make haste to escape ; let us seek conversion with real earnestness, and passion.

There is but one alternative for us all, to dwell for ever with GOD, or away from GOD. What is our choice ? What are we doing now ? Our choice is made in our daily life. Look at it—the whole course of the past—last week—to-day. Have we lived with GOD ? Do we think of GOD constantly, live with Him, act as in His presence, desire to be closer to Him, to see Him, know Him, possess Him ?

But it will be said, "GOD is so holy, so mysterious, so awful ; I fear Him ; I shrink from Him ; my nature teaches me, compels me, to do so. He is a 'consuming fire,' and 'Can a man take fire into his bosom, and not be burned ?' 'Who among us can dwell with devouring fire ; who among us can dwell with everlasting burnings ?'" To-day's commemoration gives the answer. Pentecost is a day of fire ; yet the fire rests upon the heads of those in the upper room, and harms them not. Pentecost is the day when GOD descended to dwell with man and in man ; not to terrify, to burn, to destroy, but to

give life and joy, and power, and sweetest comfort, and blessing.

There were anticipations of this. There was the "Bush that burned with fire, and was not consumed;" there were the Three Children in the midst of the fiery furnace, yet not harmed; there was Elijah's chariot of fire, that bore him safe and joyful from his life of toil to his rest and reward. There may be fire, then, without destruction, without pain and burning, with safety, with aid and blessing, and gifts supernatural.

Yes; not only may there be all this, but there must be all this to every soul that would realise its Christian calling. Every Christian soul must have its Pentecost. The HOLY GHOST dwells in each soul that is not reprobate. Our baptism gives us the first spark of His presence. Water and fire are the two great powers to cleanse and purify, or to destroy. The world was cleansed by a baptism of water at the Flood; it awaits its second and last cleansing by a baptism of fire, at the Great Day. We too have been cleansed by water; we must be purified also by fire. Our LORD said that His baptism was "with the HOLY GHOST and with fire." Fire, once kindled, spreads and grows, and searches here and there for fuel to consume; and our GOD is a "consuming fire." He is in us, unless we be reprobate. Do we feel Him, living, growing, burning, consuming within us, spreading to others? Oh, dead, cold hearts! Some know nothing of this. The fire is almost quenched; it is smothered; it is smouldering away, and will soon be quite extinct. Fire goes out when the air is foul and close, and the Spirit of GOD will not dwell in a heart that is given up to sin, that is shut close up against GOD and light. Fire goes out where there is no fuel, and our baptismal grace must be nurtured and fostered, or it will perish, and leave us dead, and passing on to corruption.

"Our GOD is a consuming fire." Do we understand it now? The fire is the Pentecostal fire, warm, bright, gentle, yet most powerful, most sweetly working. The fire is a "consuming fire;" consuming away slowly, yet surely, the unworthy things that have no right to dwell within us; selfish, worldly, sinful lusts, habits, infirmities, inheritances of woe and evil from parents and far-off ancestors; fire that pushes itself into natural qualities and talents, and fills them with supernatural life and power, just as fire lights up all that it takes hold of; fire that makes all things turn to GOD'S glory, just as flame ever strains upward; fire that transforms us into the image of CHRIST on Tabor, bright and glistering, unearthly, glorious.

Such is the Pentecostal Life of the Christian soul. This is the fire that our LORD promised. Long before He came it was foretold that His coming should be "with burning and fuel of fire." For this we are taught to pray to-day:—

"Come, HOLY GHOST, our souls inspire,
And lighten with celestial fire."

To all the baptized it has been given. In many, alas! it is but like the "smoking flax." But it is watched by GOD. He does not despise it; He will not quench it. And if we will, He will revive it and strengthen it, as He has done with so many before us. This fire we must watch and keep up with more care and anxiety than those old-world priests and virgins kept in their temples a never-extinguished, always-living fire, under pain of death. They knew not what they did; but we see in those dark rites a clear parable, a feeling after truth; and that truth we have—"GOD a consuming fire;" GOD with us, and in us; "our body the temple of the HOLY GHOST."

Trinity Sunday.

HEAVEN.

ON Ascension Day, "A door was opened in Heaven," to admit the Man CHRIST JESUS, returning in triumph to sit upon the Throne of GOD. On Whit-sun-Day, "A door was opened in Heaven," that the HOLY GHOST might come forth to dwell upon earth in the Catholic Church, and in the hearts of the faithful. And now, this Trinity Sunday, "A door is opened in Heaven," that we may see something that is done there, and remember that there is our Home; that, as Trinity Sunday is the last of the series of the festivals, up to which they all lead, in which their teaching all culminates, so Heaven is the end of the Christian life, the result of all the means of grace.

The door is opened, and we eagerly press forward to gaze. We long to know something of that other world, as men are anxious to learn all they can of the far-distant country where they are going to live. But curiosity is baffled. There is but little to be seen. An open door does not show much, especially if that which is within is large and complicated. If earth is wide and vast, surely heaven must be broad and far-reaching. If earth has many climes, sea and land, mountain and plain, valleys and hills, ten thousand varieties of beauty, endless fields for discovery, interest, attention, can we doubt that heaven exceeds all this infinitely? If man is made for earth, and the earth for man, is not heaven made for man, and man for heaven? Does not our LORD

say it is a "place prepared for us;" for us men, not for other creatures, but for us, with our natures, our faculties, our GOD-implanted gifts and aspirations?

But how little are we shown or told of man's lot, man's occupations there! Through the open door, to-day, we see little or nothing of that which will be our place, our employment. There is shown us a Throne; but we cannot even discern Him Who sits upon the Throne. There is but a dazzling appearance like the glitter of gems and precious stones. There are mysterious venerable beings adoring round about the Throne. There are "the seven Spirits of GOD;" we know not what that means. There are yet other creatures of GOD, the description of whom, as far as it is given, does but baffle our reason and show us that they are utterly unlike anything we know; some superior creation of GOD; some magnificent intelligences, infinitely above us. They are brought close to GOD; they see Him, understand Him more than we lower creatures can ever hope to understand Him, and their ceaseless occupation seems to be worship; their joy is to adore; they bask in the presence of GOD, absorbing His beauty, saturated with His wisdom, burning with quenchless love, which feeds ever upon His love, and leaves room for no other thought or desire.

But there is not a being like ourselves in all this. This is heaven, but it is not heaven for us. This region is not our future home. These glorious and exalted creatures of GOD are not our companions. They are far above us, and above even the highest saints. Their occupation is not fit for us. It is the same with much more that we are told of heaven; it relates to the angels, not to us. Indeed, if we sum up what we know, we shall find it is very little indeed; much less than people commonly suppose. There are many silly books that pretend to tell us all about heaven; but they are chiefly imagination,

and very largely made up of ignorant mistakes. A good deal is founded upon Milton's poetic fancies ; and some upon Scripture, misunderstood and quite wrongly applied.

All this does a great deal of harm. Thoughtful men see that such a heaven as is vulgarly described in many hymns and sermons and books is not the sort of place they desire, and sceptics and scoffers make fun of such an imagined destiny for man.

When JESUS was in the hands of the soldiers of Pilate and Herod, they dressed Him up, and then made fun of Him. Has not His Church been treated in the same way ? Has not His truth been so disguised and travestied and caricatured that grave men have ridiculed it, or despised and utterly and scornfully rejected it ? And has not many a seeker for truth never discovered it, because it has been so hidden by some grotesque mask, or so huddled up in masquerading trappings that serious people just glance, smile, and pass on, seeing that there is nothing there for them. Many an unbeliever in Christianity has never known what Christianity is. Many an indignant enemy of the Church does not really hate the Church, but some pitiful caricature of the Church, which has been palmed upon him by stupid and clumsy people, or narrow and bigoted fanatics. There are topics that we hardly like to speak of, because they have been made nauseous or contemptible by clap-trap preachers and the vagaries of ignorant talkers. There are texts of Scripture and phrases and expressions that we really cannot use, because they have been vulgarised and perverted and distorted, and so handled by canting and hypocritical lips, that the old sense and meaning has been altogether lost, and their associations have made them positively loathsome to all devout minds.

A man lives an ordinary life, without a trace of true religion about him ; he dies, and his friends

immediately talk about his having "gone to heaven"! Gone to heaven! Why, as Rowland Hill once said, in his rough way, of such people, "If they were taken to heaven, they would be as out of place as a boy in a flower-garden." Gone to heaven! Perhaps there will be nothing left of them, when they die, to go to heaven. There is an insect called the Ichneumon, that deposits its eggs in the body of a caterpillar, which presently are hatched into grubs, and begin at once to feed upon the embryo butterfly within the caterpillar. They do not touch the bodily frame of the caterpillar itself, so that to all appearance it is whole and sound; but when the life of the caterpillar has come to an end, and its butterfly life should begin, it is but an empty skin! So it looks as if some men had within them an enemy that eats out all their spiritual life, and actually destroys their souls, so that when they die they die like the beast; or, as the Oriental sages say, they actually turn into beasts, and are born and live mere animals. That is what devout men of the old Asiatic religions say of such men, while ignorant friends here talk of them as "gone to heaven"!

So we read in newspapers, written to gratify the morbid curiosity of a debased class of mind, how hardened and degraded murderers write unctuous letters about "JESUS and glory." Epitaphs and funeral-cards reek with similar stuff, so that the simple child who had wandered for some time in a cemetery might well ask its father, "Where are all the wicked people buried?" Old Bunyan's "Pilgrim's Progress" is out of date now-a-days, and if we are to believe the ranting, self-appointed preachers that shout and scream, there is now some sort of railroad to heaven, and neither time nor labour are required to get there, and "working out our salvation with fear and trembling" is a thing of the past. We have changed all that; and each new sect hawks

heaven about the streets at a cheaper rate than was ever known before.

Alas that so it is ! We may despise the ignorance of it ; we may smile at the utter folly of it ; we may be indignant at the presumption of it ; but we may well weep at the harm that must come of it, at the dishonour it brings upon CHRIST, at the contempt it pours upon the Gospel, at the blind delusion that it wraps round poor foolish souls, who, when they ought to be weeping over sin, and hiding themselves from all, that they may be found of the Good Shepherd, are flaunting their so-called conversion upon platforms, and alternating the hideous details of their past wickedness with the "glory alleluias" of their imagined salvation and safety, and of their certainty of "going to heaven." St. Paul counted not himself to have apprehended. He feared lest, after all, he too might be "a castaway." But modern fanaticism has no such fears, and is on easy terms with GOD, and is quite familiar with heaven.

How different from all this is, and ever has been, the attitude and teaching of the Catholic Church ! Nowhere in Creeds or Liturgies, or other authorised declarations, is there any dogmatising respecting heaven. The martyr's grave in the catacombs merely bears his name, a sacred symbol, and the word "Peace." Other primitive resting-places of the holy dead are inscribed with the wish for mutual prayer ; the dead and the living being still one in CHRIST, still interceding the one for the other, just as before death. All the departed are represented as waiting for the Resurrection and the Great Judgment, not yet perfected, not yet in heaven.

Where heaven is, what it is, what will be the state and occupations of those who are admitted there, the Church does not say. She repeats the Apostle's words, "Eye hath not seen, nor ear

heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things that GOD hath prepared for them that love Him ; ” and the words of St. John himself, who wrote this Book of Revelation, “ It doth not yet appear what we shall be ; ” and the grave words of a Greater than either, when men questioned Him about the unseen, “ Strive to enter into the narrow gate, for many shall seek to enter in, and shall not be able.” The little that is told us of that other land is almost all negative ; what will not be there, rather than a description of what heaven is ; how it is unlike this life, rather than what it is like ; no death, no sin, no tears, no separation—this we are told ; and then much allegory and symbolism that cannot be clearly understood, only it leaves an impression like the delicious, inexplicable sense of satisfaction that comes from hearing beautiful music ; like the scent of flowers in the air on a summer day, very sweet, but undefined ; not to be described by words.

Why should we complain of this ? Have we ever thought of the patient faith of the old-world saints, Abraham, Moses, David, and the rest ? What did they know of heaven ? Yet they were content. They served GOD while they lived, and trusted Him with their souls when they died. We know more than they knew ; can we not leave our Heavenly Father unquestioned, when He says that He has prepared a home for us, His children ? We know more of our wonderful nature than they knew ; can we not see that our present condition may make it impossible for us to understand what we shall be in another and higher state of existence ? Think what manhood is, as compared with childhood. Think what sight adds to hearing, touch to sight, taste to smell ; may we not have other senses, nobler faculties, at present in abeyance, that will be to us more than all our present five senses together ? There do seem to be such powers latent within us,

sometimes peeping timidly out, sometimes partially exercised under peculiar circumstances. Everywhere there has been upward progress. We may well believe that we have not yet attained the highest and best that is possible for us. Our intellects, our affections, these are too intimately parts of ourselves to be lost by death. Here we intensely delight in beauty, in music, in love, in knowledge; here we are learning something new every day; shall we not have all these joys in our higher condition? Here some of us are conscious of talents that are never exercised, tastes and aspirations that are never gratified. Poverty, sickness, adverse circumstances, have kept us down, and made us other and lower than we know we might have been. We are as children who die before they can develop their gifts and powers; as savages who have no opportunity of advancement; as imbeciles, whose bodily organs are unequal to be the instruments of noble mental and spiritual faculties. Shall there not be a future for us, where we may find a sphere suitable for us? Shall it not be with us as with all GOD'S works, that nothing is made in vain, nothing wasted?

It has been well and wisely said, that one of the deepest and sweetest experiences is to be intimately associated with one higher and better than oneself, who does not despise our inferiority, but loves to teach us and make us happy. Must not this be part of the joy of heaven; to meet GOD'S saints, and know them and love them, and be familiar with them, and be taught by them, and led upward, and by their love to be taught to grow like them? For surely there will still be progress there, perfection and progress together, without paradox; just as in the orange-grove each tree has its ripe fruit, side by side with fragrant silver flowers and still-forming buds.

Then there is the angelic host. Here they have

ministered to us; will not they meet us there as familiar friends? And what will they not have to tell us? When worlds were made, they were there. Fancy, if you can, the marvels of science with which any angel could delight our eager minds!—

“We shall be free to wander evermore
In thought ; the spirit’s motion o’er the wide
And wondrous universe, with messages
To beautiful beings who have never fallen,
And worlds that never heard the cry of sin.”

And then there will be our LORD; exalted, indeed, above all things, but still a Man; surely in some way, at some times, accessible to each soul for whom He died, whom He loves with a special love. Who can imagine what this means? Take the Old Testament story of the Queen of Sheba communing with Solomon of all that was in her heart, and of her speechless, joyous, satisfied amazement and delight at his wisdom, so far beyond all that had been told her, and thence learn, as by a parable, something of the devout soul’s ecstasy when it can see its LORD, hear Him, touch Him, see in His eyes that He loves it.

There, too, there will be worship. This we read clearly; this reason demands; this our hearts’ instincts long for. Will there be days and times for worship? Will there be glorious outbursts of thanksgiving, music, spontaneous untaught harmonies? Will our great High Priest lead us, going near, as we may not, to the Throne of the Eternal, and offering for us and with us the outpourings of unnumbered hearts, the love, the adoration, the self-surrender, the yearnings that cannot be uttered of the whole being of the creature to its Creator? “Thou art worthy, O LORD, to receive glory and honour and power, for Thou hast created all things, and for Thy pleasure they are, and were created.”



First Sunday after Trinity.

DISADVANTAGES.

WE read in the Gospel to-day that "there was a certain rich man."

The man was rich; such was GOD'S dispensation, Who "ordereth all things in heaven and earth." His riches were his ruin; was this too the will of GOD? Was the man inevitably elected and pre-destined to perdition, as some would say; or was he fated so, as others would phrase it?

We touch here upon one of the great problems of human life, one of the deep heart-questions that have always exercised thinking men, and that sometimes come home to us with painful force. This man was probably born rich, and his riches worked in him bad results. He lived a selfish, indulgent, grovelling life, a wasted life, and when it was over, his soul found itself a pauper, an undeveloped infant in everything but innocence, a debtor, a criminal in the presence of its Maker and LORD, Whom it had ignored, and Whose rights and claims it had outraged.

And must we not be sure that there are many such still, whose riches are ruining them? There is in them no true manliness, no progress, no high purpose; they do no good, either to themselves or to any other, year after year, all their life long. They have talents, good purpose, worthy plans and aims, sometimes, but there is no necessity for exer-

tion, and present ease pulls them back into inaction when they would rise to work and duty. All is made pleasant for them ; men wait upon them, fawn upon them, flatter them, worship them. But, oh, what poor things they are ; what starveling souls ; what mean, miserable, crippled, idiot souls, with here and there some monstrous growth and hideous development ! Go to workhouse and madhouse and hospital ; go to savage lands, and see the poor, degraded men that grovel there, and you see the bodily resemblance of the souls of men and women who have had the misfortune to be rich, and who have misused their riches, as did this man in the parable. Death comes, and strips off the pampered body, and bares the wretched, prisoned, forgotten soul, that shivers and limps into light, imbecile, contemptible, horrible.

Or take another case ; a man is born with a moral deformity, a vile temper, overmastering indolence, a tendency to drink or theft. Such things are ; just as there are deformed bodies, and some are born blind, or deaf and dumb, or diseased. Some, too, have evil surroundings, bad example, hard lots, deep poverty, or other disadvantage. Others have great talents, and misuse them to their own injury, and that of others—beauty, wit, power to rule men, artistic skill, long life, scientific specialty, and all the other gifts that make men or women different from the common throng ; a Napoleon, a Solomon, a Cleopatra, a Helen ; and all the thousand more that play similar parts, but in smaller spheres, not worldwide, but in some little circle, where they reign supreme, and reign but to do harm.

Is GOD'S providence cruel and unjust to all these in making them so ? Are they responsible, having been so made ? Could they have been otherwise than they have shown themselves ? Are Mahomet and Calvin right, with their fate and predestination ;

and modern materialists, with their blind laws and inevitable cause and effect ?

The Christian man has but one answer to all these questions. He believes in an infinite and holy and most loving GOD. He holds Him just and good, even when He cannot understand His ways. There are residuary difficulties everywhere, which he is content to leave unsolved, to pass by as no-thoroughfares, without an outlet, and to go on his way, resting his whole weight without fear upon the eternal justice of the Creator, and looking up with yet warmer trust into the Face of his Father in heaven, Whose love has been so marvellously and so often proved.

But there is yet another answer which has its due place, and with some will have even greater weight than this. It is the answer of experience and fact and example. Turn over the pages of the records of the past ; look out into the world to-day ; and you shall see for yourselves that man's fate is not inevitable ; that man is free, and GOD is just and merciful, and that disadvantages may be overcome, and difficulties surmounted, and hindrances converted into aids, and turned into good.

Was not that Abraham in whose bosom Lazarus found rest a rich man in his human life ? His riches did not ruin him. And have there not been thousands since who have been born rich, or who have grown rich, and yet have lived for GOD, and made mammon itself their friend, and who now rest in Paradise with faithful Abraham ? So with those other qualities, good or bad, of which we have spoken ; which of them is there that has not been well used, while others have abused and prostituted them, and wrung ruin only and misery out of them ? You complain that you are hardly dealt with by GOD. At the Great Day there shall stand beside you, not one nor two, but a host, who, like you, had

this same lot as yours, and who turned it only to good and high use, and found it nothing but blessing. Physical and material difficulties, moral and intellectual disadvantages, you shall see all alike overcome by the patience, the unwearied energy, of men and women, and the readily given grace of GOD. This life is a term of probation, of education. As at school and university we have hard problems to solve, languages to learn, difficulties to exercise and develop brain, and determine class and place and honours and future life; so is this whole life to us a school and preparation for the eternal life to come. "Difficult is it?" says Carlyle; "difficult? The short-fibre cotton was difficult, useless, disobedient as the thistle by the wayside; have we not conquered it, and made it into beautiful webs? Ye have shivered mountains asunder, made hard iron pliant to you as soft putty; the sea-demon stretches his back for a sleek highway for you, and on fire-horses and wind-horses ye career; ye are sons of the land of difficulties conquered. Difficult! ye must try the thing."

How many owe their success in life to the disadvantages that encompassed them in the beginning of their career! A struggle was necessary, and this brought their faculties into play; just as we confine and press down steam and explosive gases, to develop and increase their power. Shall not the old Greek fable teach us to put our own shoulder to the wheel, when the thing has to be done; or shall not Holy Writ teach us a wise rashness, founded upon past deliverances, and when all seems hopeless, yet bid us "Go forward"?

There was in the earliest Christian age a saint who fled from the world and its temptations, and who was bidden to go and see one holier and higher than himself, and found him a poor working-man, who lived in the midst of the world which the other

had fled from, and whose sanctity none knew but GOD. There was a great singer who kept herself from pride and the snares of her profession by each morning offering the first-fruits of her marvellous gift to the great Giver by singing His praises. Some years ago, there might be seen an artist copying pictures in Antwerp Cathedral. He had been born without arms, but love of art and indomitable perseverance had taught him to paint with his feet as well as others do with their hands.

Have we not seen the wonders of chemistry? Have we not seen a lump of ice made in a red-hot crucible, water break out into fire, solids turn to gases, and crystals formed from liquids? If man has this power over created things, has he not similar power over himself and the circumstances that surround him? The Philosopher's Stone has not yet been discovered; but the Christian, by GOD's grace, can turn all things to gold, and be rich indeed for ever.

What we know not now, we shall know hereafter. Ages ago, they tell us, vast tracts of country in this earth were covered with forests; trees and mosses grew and matured and died; there was no eye of man to see the luxuriant beauty of those glades; generation after generation of tree and shrub arose and grew and perished, and all seemed lost and wasted. But the great LORD of all knew what He would do, and we in these far-off days dig out the coal, the mainspring of modern life, into which those perished forests were transformed. Thousands of acres of land, north of the smiling and fertile plains of Italy, are covered with the rocks and glaciers of the Alps. The utilitarian says, "What waste of valuable space! But for these barren mountains thousands might get a living upon that same expanse of country." But the exigencies of modern civilisation have found a use for the Alps. The over-

worked brain renews its life while weary men breathe the fresh air of those snowy heights, and the far-seeing providence of GOD is vindicated, and He is seen not to have made a mistake.

The oyster feels an unwelcome growth beneath its shell, and is inconvenienced by what is to it but a disease; but man finds it, and prizes it for its beauty, and calls it a pearl. So in the Great Day shall many that are last be first, and the infirmities of the flesh shall be found to have been to them priceless jewels; and the heavy blows that have fallen upon them shall be seen to have been but the strokes of the great Sculptor's chisel that have knocked away the rough stone, and released the beauteous prisoned figure, the man after the image of GOD.

Second Sunday after Trinity.

THE EVILS OF PEACE.

WE almost give a sigh of relief as we read at the end of the Lesson to-day, "The land had rest forty years." We have been reading of the horrors of war, of invasion, of suffering in all shapes, of blood and slaughter and savagery. "Welcome Peace, with plenty crowned." Oh, how welcome must it have been to a nation that had suffered as Israel had suffered from the repeated invasions of the Midianites, of Sisera's hosts, and other enemies ! What rest to lie down to sleep without fear of midnight surprise and murder ! What rest to rise in the morning with no thought of impending battle, with no dread for husband or son ! We, in favoured England, know nothing, thank God ! of war at home. But war at a distance is bad enough. The wounds are still green and aching that hearts have received at home while war has raged and slain and mutilated in other countries. Yes, war is very dreadful, look at it as we may ; wasteful of man's best, destructive of all precious things, bringing in its train every misery, calling out every evil passion and power of man's nature, and making men like devils. Who would not pray for peace ? Who will not praise peace and deprecate war ?

And yet, in this, as in all other matters, there is something to be said on the other side. We may speak truly of the horrors of war, but there is also

much to be said of the evils of peace. War is awful, and yet it has its good side. It is painful, yet often wholesome; mighty for evil, yet mighty also for good.

See what to-day's Lessons tell us; see what war brought about. Look at Gideon's chivalrous courage and daring. Who can but admire Barak and his small army jeopardising their lives for their country's liberty, sacrificing themselves for their nation's honour, and the safety of their homes, and the honour of GOD? Nay, danger and extremity make the weak strong. A woman is prophetess and judge, and Deborah leads Israel to victory and glory. Then the land had rest and peace for forty years, and what is the immediate result? The first verse of the next chapter tells us, "The children of Israel did evil in the sight of the LORD." This was the fruit of peace. Rest and plenty bred vices, just as stagnant pools breed creeping things and noisome exhalations and fevers and pestilence.

Nor is this the only instance which the Book gives us for our learning and our warning. David was a man of war from youth to age, and his people were simple and brave and pure and united, and GOD was feared and worshipped. David died, and Solomon reigned—reigned in profound peace for forty years, and Israel was rich, powerful, and prosperous. But Solomon became a voluptuary and a sceptic. The sensual rites of idolatry were introduced; the people lost faith in GOD and in their king; and the foundations of schism and rebellion were laid, to spring up and be established in the next reign, and never to be extinguished.

And what the Bible teaches, that also all history teaches. The times of a country's greatness have always been the times of war. Look, for example, at the reign of Elizabeth, when England had to fight at a disadvantage for her very existence; yet what

greatness did she display ; what noble minds did she produce, whose wonderful works will never die, never cease to be held precious and glorious ! The same thing happened again at the beginning of this century, when England had to fight single-handed against almost every country of Europe. Other countries display the same phenomenon. Well might Alexander weep because there were no more nations to conquer. Well might he wish for another world to subdue to his might, for he knew well that with rest and idleness come degeneracy and luxury, and all the meaner vices of human nature.

And that which is true of nations is true also of individuals. How often is success due to energy developed by the pressure of adverse circumstances ! How often is genius wasted and lost because a man's lot is too easy ! Look at Gideon, armed, leading Israel to victory and liberty, with high purpose and steadfast faith in GOD ; and then see him afterwards degenerating in time of peace to a miserable idolater. Look at David, with his mighty men, each rivalling the other in noble deeds of daring ; in all his dangers looking up straight to GOD, always pure, always brave, always honourable. And then see the contrast, when peace reigned, and he rises from his bed and sits in the voluptuous Eastern evening gazing dreamily upon his city, till evil desire kindles in his heart, and lust and cruelty and treachery and murder reign and rule without check. Nor does he stand alone. Profane history points to Antony, and many more ; and poets, like our own Spencer, sing of knights, once brave and pure, who have in time of peace put off with their harness all that made them noble, all that made them men, till they have sunk down into sensual rest and indulgence and shameful sloth.

Yes, there is something to be said, after all, for war, and something to be said against peace. In a

world like ours, where evil is so mixed up with good, it seems as if unmixed good were impossible, and that, in the manifold providence of GOD, evil is one of the ingredients that His cunning hand and mighty power and far-seeing eye mingle up to work out by subtle alchemy the great designs of His will. Just as in nature storms and earthquakes are terrible and destructive, and yet they are instruments, not blindly wasting, but doing needful work that must be thus rudely done, or there will be more destructive stagnation and more fatal decay from rest and repose; so it seems that, in the affairs of man, war is one of the wholesome, though bitter, remedies for that downward tendency to corruption that breeds itself spontaneously in men singly and in nations.

"The army," says Mr. Ruskin, "is the salvation of myriads. The men who, under other circumstances, would have sunk into lethargy or dissipation, are redeemed into noble life by a service which at once summons and directs their energies. Both peace and war are noble or ignoble according to their kind and occasion. But peace may be sought in two ways. You may either win your peace or buy it; win it by resistance to evil, buy it by compromise with evil. You may buy your peace with silenced consciences; you may buy it with broken vows; buy it with lying words; buy it with base connivances; buy it with the blood of the slain, and the cry of the captive, and the silence of lost souls over hemispheres of the earth, while you sit smiling at your serene hearths, lisping comfortable prayers, and muttering continually to yourselves 'Peace, peace,' when there is no peace, but only captivity and death for you, as well as for those you leave unsaved, and yours darker than theirs. No nation ever yet enjoyed a protracted and triumphant peace without receiving into its bosom ineradicable seeds of future decline. I will not argue the matter, but

appeal at once to the testimony of those whom war has cost the dearest. I know what would be told me by those who have suffered nothing, whose domestic happiness has been unbroken, whose daily comfort undisturbed, whose experience of calamity consists, at its utmost, in the incertitude of a speculation, the dearness of a luxury, or the increase of demands upon their fortune which they could meet fourfold without inconvenience—from these I can well believe, be they prudent economists or careless pleasure-seekers, the cry for peace will rise vociferously, whether in street or in senate. But I ask, their witness to whom war has changed the aspect of the earth and the imagery of heaven, whose hopes it has cut off like a spider's web, whose treasure it has placed in a moment under the seals of clay, those who nevermore see sunrise, nor watch the climbing light gild the eastern clouds, without thinking what graves it has gilded first far down behind the dark earth-line—ask their witness, and see if they will not reply that it is well with them and with theirs, that they would have it no otherwise, would not, if they might, receive back their gifts of love and life, nor take again the purple of their blood out of the cross on the breastplate of England. And this not for pride, but because also they have felt that the spirit that has discerned them for eminence in sorrow has been to them an angel of other things than agony. They know now the strength of sacrifice, and that its flames can illumine as well as consume."

Yes, do we not sometimes feel in hot, dry, sultry weather, "Oh, for a good thunderstorm!" We are not fond of thunder; we know that lightning is destructive; we like bright sunshine better than black cloud and plashing rain, and yet we see that these convulsions of nature are good and wholesome, and that life and health need them. We should like some milder remedy, if it might be had, but our

system knows none but this rough one, and so we bid it come. So in these days, when we do not know whether to wonder or to smile or to be angry at the sight of the soft, useless lives of so many, with their ridiculous grievances and their puerile pleasures ; when we see hosts more grubbing and scraping for money, and chuckling over downright dishonesty, as if it were a talent or a merit ; when we see the lower ranks of society brutalised by low indulgences and misled by designing demagogues ; when we see all this and a thousand other miseries and disgraces and abuses, do we not sometimes feel that, if there is to be salvation for us as a nation, there must be some purifying fire to sweep over all this, and that a sharp and severe war, that would be for life and honour and liberty and national existence, would be a wholesome thing indeed ; would recall men and women to duty and simplicity and earnestness and the fear of GOD ; would give them some aim in life, some purpose, and raise one and all to think of something else than their despicable selves and their own petty ends and aims ?

But if these things are so as regards temporal matters, they are equally true with respect to spiritual matters. Read the history of Christianity. What have been its greatest enemies ? Have they not been peace and worldly prosperity ? As soon as persecution ceased, heresy began. As soon as bishop and martyr ceased to be almost synonymous terms, bishops began to be worldly. As soon as wealth poured in upon the Church, abuses multiplied. And so it has been said, "At first the bishops' crosiers were but wooden staves, but then the bishops were golden ; by-and-by the crosiers were of gold and jewelled, but then the bishops were wooden !" CHRIST had said that His Church and the world were to be perpetual enemies ; that the Church was to be ever militant, ever aggressive, and so be pure, while she

was always progressive; but time saw the Church and the world in unworthy alliance, and the world was no better for it, and the Church was sadly the worse.

Israel's charter of old was war against the nations of Canaan till they were consumed; but peace and alliances were made, and so Canaan was never wholly possessed, and GOD'S purposes were frustrated. Turn over page after page of the Church's annals, and the same law is seen in operation. A zealous man stirs up a spirit of progress, and at once all the Gospel-fruits appear, and CHRIST showers His blessings, and His very presence is discernible. Religious Orders are founded in the spirit of the Sermon on the Mount; they grow, they spread; it seems as if all the glorious promises of CHRIST were going to be realised. But presently wealth and honours come. There is peace and quietness where there had been eager energy and restless advance. The enemy has conquered, not by opposition, but by caresses; and the warrior of CHRIST is no longer fighting, and the Church has lost her right arm.

Yes, war is the Church's true vocation; it is essential to her life; war not with sword of steel, but with the sword of the LORD; the propagation of the faith by the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of GOD. If there is life, there is and must be growth. If there is fire, the fire must spread and devour. If the Church be not dead or dying, there must be missionary zeal; there must be in each congregation of the faithful a proselytising spirit emanating, a leaven pushing its way hither and thither, to pervade, if it may be, all things within its reach.

Would it have been possible for our land to have so relapsed as it has, especially in our large towns, into heathenism and godlessness, if the Church had been true to her mission, if Christian men had done

their duty ? There have been cold, dead times. The trumpet-call to the LORD'S battle has not been heard, and the spoilers, the World, the Flesh, and the Devil, have come out in their three companies and wasted the heritage of GOD.

Why do we read those old-world histories of Israel's battles, but to stir up our hearts, to teach our hands to war and our fingers to fight ? Why does the New Testament remind us of Gideon, of Barak, of Samson, of Jephtha, of David also, and Samuel, but because they were saviours of their country by honourable war ? "The land is ours, and we go not up to possess it." It is not worse with us than it was with their country in the days of these heroes. They did and dared ; they fought and endured ; and the LORD wrought a great victory by their hands. And now He does but wait to bless those who range themselves under His banner, and against cruel odds march on dauntless. We can do all things, if only we will. It is our fault, our grievous fault, our sloth, our unbelief, our luxury, our cowardice—these arm our enemies, and spoil the fair realms of CHRIST on earth.

"Shame upon you, legions of the heavenly King !
What ! with pipe and tabor fool away the light,
When He bids you labour, when He bids you, Fight !"

The better Jehu cries, "Who is on my side, who?" and to some, "What hast thou to do with peace ? Turn thee behind me." May there be throughout this land of CHRIST a declaration of war, a call to arms, a throwing away the scabbard, a rising of the armies of GOD against His enemies. Thank GOD there are signs of life and movement among us ! There are here and there men of rank, influence, and education who visit the lowest neighbourhoods, and work with self-sacrifice, and fight the devil manfully ; there are men, unlearned and ignorant, but full

of zeal and spiritual fire ; there are apostles of temperance, apostles of sanitary reform ; there are godly and blessed women, who teach, nurse, comfort, and with gentle, pure hands lift up the fallen and lost. Colleges at the Universities and public schools are starting and maintaining missions in the slums of London and other great towns. Let us pray that the blessed Spirit of Light and Truth may be shed upon the Church, giving us unity and love and strength ; then great shall be the company of the preachers, and great the power of their words ; and then honour and glory and victory will come, must come ; come to the conquerors, come to the conquered ; for in this warfare all are blessed alike.

“Oh, that the forces indeed were arrayed ! Oh, joy of the onset !

Sound, thou trumpet of GOD ! Come forth, great cause, to array us !

King and Leader, appear ! Thy soldiers, sorrowing, call Thee.”

But if this aggressive spirit is the true life of the Church, it is essential also to each member of the Church. We are enrolled as soldiers of CHRIST at our Baptism, and there is no furlough for any one of us. People sometimes complain bitterly that besetting faults still cling to them in spite of effort and prayer ; that they do not get on, or grow sensibly better, and that they get out of heart and desponding, and that they feel inclined to give up, because it is such hard, discouraging work to be always resisting the same temptations, always fighting the same infirmities, always struggling against difficulties and drawbacks of every kind ; and they say, “Oh for rest and peace ! Oh for the end of all this, and quiet and victory !” What is the answer to such but “Onward, Christian soldier !” This sense of struggling and battling is your surest sign of hope. You cannot be very far wrong so long as you are

fighting sword in hand on CHRIST'S side. It is not for common soldiers to know exactly how their regiment is placed. You cannot expect the general to leave his post and come to you individually, and tell you all his plans, and explain to you all the details of the great battle that is being fought. Enough for you that you are His soldier, fighting in His good cause, certain of victory, certain of reward. Do your plain duty. You have your orders; you have your task, suited to your ability; do that faithfully; do your best; but, come what will, be always fighting; so you are safe. It is only when you lie down, or sleep, or give yourself up to ease and indulgence that there is danger for you.

The old Moslem saying has truth at its root, "The gate of Paradise is made of crossed swords." It will not be long. There is rest prepared for the people of GOD. It will come soon; and when it comes, it will be unbroken and inexhaustible. There will be time enough then for repose. Now for a little while there must be ceaseless fighting. A little while you must be in this troublesome world; and then rest; then the place prepared for you in that happy land "where, beyond these voices, there is peace."

Third Sunday after Trinity.

SAMUEL'S LIFE AT SHILOH.

"THE child Samuel grew before the LORD." These or similar words are repeated no less than six times in this morning's Lesson, and the following chapters. They come in like the burden of an old ballad, or like the theme of some piece of music. At the beginning we are introduced to it; then we are led away from it up and down sweet and complicated strains, till presently there is a gradual modulation, and we know what is coming, and are delighted when the original air steals back note by note. Then perhaps there is a contrast, a change of key, power and intricacy and rapidity, and we are taken by surprise when the old melody is brought back once more, now perhaps a little altered, as if it had been affected by the influence of the conflicting elements from which it has emerged. So the skilful composer will go on introducing infinite variations, yet always keeping his original idea in view, ever and anon returning to it, and culminating at last with a phrase or a chord that satisfies and delights the ear, and leaves it thrilling with the haunting memory of that oft-repeated melody, so that it comes up unbidden, and its echoes frame themselves into reality upon our lips or our fingers.

There are other instances of this rhythmical repetition in the Bible. Thus in the first chapter of Genesis the phrase, "The evening and the morning were such a day," strikes the ear with its measured

monotony, and seems to tell of order and repetition and progress, like the banners of some great procession that mark at once its length and its unity. One of the most striking instances is the refrain in the Psalms, "His mercy endureth for ever," coming as it does sometimes by way of example, sometimes of contrast, sometimes without visible connection, but impressing itself all the more by its obtrusive repetition. So it is in the New Testament with our LORD'S significant words, "Verily I say unto you, They have their reward;" or that more severe denunciation, "Woe unto you Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites."

In to-day's Lesson the repeated recalling to the mind of Samuel's innocent ministering childhood is most striking. First there is the inspired song of his mother, and as it ends, we read, "The child did minister to the LORD before Eli the priest." Then comes the horrible record of the sacrilege of Eli's sons, as they robbed and desecrated the sacrifices of GOD; and then immediately the old idea by way of contrast, "But Samuel ministered before the LORD, being a child, girded with a linen ephod." Then a few words respecting his father and mother, and then, "And the child Samuel grew before the LORD." Then once more the record returns to Eli and his sons, and tells of other and deeper sin, till we glide unconsciously into the restful phrase, "The child Samuel grew on, and was in favour with the LORD, and also with men." Next comes the terrible message of the man of GOD to Eli, with its climax foretelling abject poverty and misery and shame to this family of unworthy priests; and then, without break or pause, the old familiar idea, "The child Samuel ministered unto the LORD before Eli." Then Samuel's first vision, his detail of it to Eli, and Eli's reception of the humiliating reproof and doom; all terminating with the same picture of quiet, innocent fulfilment of

duty, progress and growth, "And Samuel grew, and the LORD was with him."

Such, then, is one of those many unobtrusive beauties of Bible history which delight those who read and mark its pages in a humble, loving spirit. In such half-hidden teaching lies the value of many of our Sunday Lessons, which the careless and indevout never notice, never profit by.

For is there not much significance and instruction in this record of the life and progress of a child of GOD? The world goes on, with its routine, with its catastrophes, with its sins; but in some quiet corner, unnoticed, almost unknown, GOD is nourishing His own son, and preparing the heir for his inheritance. Men grasp greedily at things forbidden; men sin against GOD and against themselves, till the bitter end comes; but side by side with them is the quiet, sober man, proving in his own experience that "Godliness with contentment is great gain;" for while these men, with ill-gotten gains, dearly purchased by the loss of peace and happiness here, and by immeasurable loss in the world that will soon be revealed, can carry nothing away with them when they die, this man has been laying up treasure in heaven, and will, like an heir who has had a long minority, step into vast accumulated wealth the moment his inheritance is his own.

Do not those words of our LORD often come into our minds, when the wealth and pride and luxury of the world flaunt themselves before us, "The last shall be first, and the first last"? Do we not sometimes wonder where GOD is educating those who will be the aristocracy, the millionaires, of the world to come, the princes, the great ones, the leaders and lords of many? Ah! what strange revelations there will be in that great day of light and truth! What triumphs of the Cross; what unsuspected heroism; what exaltation of humanity; what nobility of life

and character brought out by the true and loyal acceptance of the principles of CHRIST'S teaching! All through the ages there have been from time to time sudden revelations of these hidden worthies, these great and noble souls who always exist, the salt of the earth, but who for the most part live and die unknown, except to GOD and His holy angels, and perhaps to a few who are at their side, and know what they are.

In the primitive days, when persecution broke out, there was a great sifting out of untrue Christians. They apostatised in droves. But then there was also the discovery of saintly souls, who but for this had never been heard of; children like Pancras, slave-girls like Blandina, refined and cultured ladies like Agnes, officers in the army like Sebastian. None had suspected how great they were, so quiet and unobtrusive had been their holiness.

Think of those dark, troublous times when men went forth into the pathless forests, and made themselves rude huts, and therelived and prayed and taught the wild, savage people to be Christian, to sow and reap, to build homes, to live quiet and cleanly, to cease to be human beasts, and to learn to be men. Then think how some lawless horde of Danes or Goths or Huns swept down upon that little community, and how the brothers quietly went into their rough church, and kneeled, and were slaughtered as they kneeled, and their bodies were lost in the charred ashes of their sanctuary, their very names unknown, their self-denials, their patience, their CHRIST-like example never recorded. Think of the honest and true lives of simple men, in those walled towns of the Middle Ages, whose ruins scarcely suffice to tell where once joys and sorrows, hopes and fears, dwelt, and all the manifold interests of human life, love and pain and death. Think of the patient goodness of wives and mothers, shrouded in

their own homes, but making brightness and kindling love in many a grateful bosom, seen and known by GOD, as the gold is seen in the mine, the jewel in the rock ; like the prince in some fairy-tale, stolen away, brought up in humble obscurity, but a prince for all that, with blue blood in his veins, and high and noble qualities inherited from long ancestry, irresistibly bursting forth in gentleness and gracious deeds.

We are horrified very often at the evil in the world, at the wickedness and degradation of humanity ; let us not forget all this inner circle of heroism and greatness and saintliness. It is the very salt of the earth, that keeps it wholesome ; that prevents the inrush of ruin and the collapse of society ; that will be the harvest reaped in by joyous angels, when the tares shall at last have been pulled up and separated, and when the Saviour shall see of the travail of His soul and be satisfied.

But then there comes the next and more important thought—And we ? What shall we be then and there ? Unwise indeed and unreasonable we, if we do not so think, and think gravely and often, and act upon what we think.

There is a story of a Court fool or jester of the Middle Ages, who, when he received his bauble, as a symbol of his office, was bidden by his master to keep it till he found a greater fool than himself to give it to ; and who came to see his lord upon his deathbed, who said to him that he was going away on a long journey and to a distant country, and that he should see him no more. “ Well,” said the fool, “ I hope you have made all your preparations, and will have a good journey and a happy arrival.” “ Alas ! ” said the great man, “ I feel that I have made no preparation at all.” “ Then,” said the other, “ surely you have been taken by surprise ; you never expected to have this journey to make.”

"Alas!" again said the dying man, "I knew all along that I had this journey to make, and yet I never gave a thought to preparation for it; I knew that I should have to live in that new country, yet I have never learned its language, or studied its customs, or made myself acquainted with its people."

"Ah!" said the jester, "take thou my bauble, for no fool can be greater than thou." A true and wise word, surely, though spoken by a fool.

Year follows year, and those whom we know are called away, and the impression deepens that our turn must be coming nearer and nearer day by day. Side by side with us, earnest men and women are acting upon this conviction, and, like Samuel, are growing and being educated and fitted for the great future before them. They know that life cannot be all holiday; they know that this life has its claims and its requirements, and they turn aside to fulfil them, but they keep always steadily in view the eternal unchanging life; they make all things subordinate to that. This one great, real, sobering, practical thought comes in ever and again, like this repeated record of Samuel's growth and ministration. To this they ever recur, whatever else may have occupied them for a time, gravitating back to it, as the momentarily diverted compass-needle swings back ever to the north. Such are the sober, earnest, undemonstrative, great middle class of Christians.

And what are we? Have we this great gravitating principle, that brings us ever naturally and inevitably back to the thought and preparation for that for which GOD has made us? Do we feel that we are growing, and being educated for a life higher, better, holier, than this? As we change, and as the world changes around us, is there still (as there is always the same face which all recognise in us, even those who remember us only in childhood), so always the same one unaltered aim, the same inner life? When the

keynote is struck from time to time by heavenly hands, is it still ever in tune with the tenor of our life? Have we not some of us got flat, lost the pitch, changed the key, forgotten the guiding theme that was given us by the Master at first? Can this oft-recurring record of Samuel's life find its parallel in ours? We grow in many things—in experience, in wisdom some of us, in wealth some of us, in age all of us; do we also, like Samuel, "grow before the Lord"?

Fourth Sunday after Trinity.

THE PERFECT MAN.

IT gives interest, force, and meaning to the words of Peter, the fisherman, in the Epistle to-day, when we notice that the word "perfect," which he uses, is one that is connected with his old craft. When our LORD called the sons of Zebedee they were "mending their nets;" literally, making them "perfect;" and now, when Peter had become a "fisher of men," he cannot better describe the spiritual life than by using a similitude drawn from the fisherman's necessary work; work that is not fishing, but is essential to the success of his fishing—repairing the rents in his nets, strengthening the weak places, making it good all over, "perfect." A net may have good weights to sink one side of it; good floats to keep up the other side; good ropes to let it down and haul it up again; good meshwork generally; but if there be one weak point, all the rest will not be of much use; something will give way, and the fish actually netted will be lost, as completely as if they had never been caught at all. Now, says St. Peter, what is true of a net is true of a man. Every man has his weak point; he must mend that. Man is made up of many functions, many powers. His nature is diverse and multiform; he has body, soul, and spirit, will, affections, intellect, memory, imagination, desire. The perfect man is he who cultivates all these; keeps all active, healthy, and withal

equally balanced ; none in excess, none stunted or overborne. If one organ of the body is inordinately developed it produces disease and leads to death. So a man may become monstrous, unhealthy, imperfect, injurious, if there be one important part of his nature which is neglected, stunted, forced down out of due proportion.

This is a great truth that no one will deny in the abstract, but in the present day it is especially needful to remind ourselves of it, in its practical bearing upon our daily life. The vast progress of knowledge and of the arts and sciences renders division essential. It is a day of specialties. In the simple country village one shop provides all that is wanted ; in a great city there are many wants, and each trade has its own shops. In a low stage of civilisation each man does everything for himself ; in a highly civilised community there is division of labour and a multitude of occupations, each man doing only one kind of work ; and the result is, not only that more work is done, but that better work is done, and perfection attained that could be arrived at in no other way. We have but recently begun to act upon this principle. Not long ago, in all schools and universities, there was but one course of study for all ; now each student may follow the special leading of his own intellectual powers. There are more and more specialists in medicine, in surgery, in engineering, in science, in writing books, in navigation, in travel ; in everything. Even our sports are reduced to a system and a science, and no one expects to be first-rate in more than one study or art or accomplishment. Not so long ago the Dame-school was thought good enough for the majority of the people ; now education is not only advanced, but is carried forward on scientific principles. The ear is cultured by music, the eye is trained by beauty of form and harmony of colour, and capabilities hitherto lying

dormant are discovered and brought into progressive development.

Just as the angels saw the gold in California, and the diamonds in Africa, ages before man discovered them; just as steam and electricity existed long before they were made useful, so in any human mind and soul there may be latent powers that are lying dormant because they have never been called forth into active exercise. Compare the collier with the astronomer. The one works underground and needs little more than strong muscles; the other requires years of study, knowledge of intricate calculations, the use of most delicate instruments. Interchange the men's occupations, and each will be helpless, useless. So in every man there are special faculties for special purposes, and they will do for no others. The finest telescope ever constructed will not discover GOD. The most powerful microscope will not find the soul. So the cultivation of the intellect will not give a man faith. It is the pure in heart who see GOD. It is the eyes of the heart that need to be enlightened that we may know Him. To believe in GOD we must surrender the will. He says, "Son, give Me thy heart." We cannot long hold on to GOD by the logical faculty alone while we give the heart to other things. To know GOD is more an act of acceptance than of discovery. Faith implies an act of surrender. The truest picture of theology is that of a little child looking up to his father with love and trust. We cannot meet GOD on equal terms. He "resisteth the proud."

Can we not see why so many clever men are unbelievers? They have cultivated one set of faculties, and ignored another set. The intellect has filled the whole field, and left no space for the heart to exercise itself. Simple-minded Christians are sometimes staggered, and their faith almost overthrown, because they find that some of the master-minds of

the day, men confessedly first in their own special study, are unbelievers. If we look at the fact from this standpoint, we shall see that it is really no argument at all against the acceptance of Christianity. Such men are no more competent judges in the matter than a blind man is a judge of colour or beauty. Each man has but a certain amount of vital force; if he expends it all upon one pursuit, there is nothing left for other objects. The late Mr. Darwin was a remarkable instance of this. He says of himself: "Up to the age of thirty, poetry gave me great pleasure, pictures gave me considerable, music very great delight; but now I cannot endure to read a line of poetry; I have lost my taste for pictures and music; fine scenery does not cause me the exquisite delight which it formerly did. My mind seems to have become a kind of machine for grinding general laws out of large collections of facts. Why this should have caused the atrophy of that part of the brain on which the higher tastes depend, I cannot conceive."

If we attended nothing but drawing-classes we should never learn to sing. Some years ago, when the American war stopped the supply of cotton, thousands were thrown out of employment, for they had never learned to do anything but attend to machinery for cotton manufacture; and when the mills were stopped they could not turn their hands to anything else. This is one of the disadvantages of a high civilisation and the consequent division of labour; a great number of persons can only do one thing, and if that fails they are destitute at once. They give all their attention to learn one particular industry; they become skilful in that, but they cannot turn their hands to anything else. So whenever trade is bad there are multitudes of clerks without means of living; they are not wanted; they can only do one sort of work, and therefore they are in distress.

Just like this is the spiritual condition of many. The moral faculties and the powers of the soul have been entirely neglected, till they have become atrophied, paralysed, useless. The man has lost all power of intercourse with GOD, all desire of super-sensual things, all consciousness of the supernatural. The intellectual man has trained and forced his mental powers; the man of business has given his whole thought to his trade; the working-man has lived very much like an animal; and the result in all alike is, that the soul has been crushed down, and its powers weakened, till it almost ceases to live, and quite ceases to act and make itself felt.

It may be said, there must be different occupations in a civilised community; some must work with the head, and some with the hands; special talents must find their exercise, each in its own fitting employment. This is quite true; but the merchant, the lawyer, the tradesman, the mechanic, the labourer, while each follows his own calling, is still a man. The variety of occupation does not prevent any from being a good husband and a happy father. The man's affections and his home-duties exist and work side by side with the due fulfilment of his trade or profession; he may be "perfect" in both. So the Christian system has added a third requirement to the old heathen ideal of human perfection. It demands not merely "a sound mind in a sound body," but also a spirit that exercises its proper functions, and has intercourse with spiritual persons and things, and especially with the great Father of Spirits, the eternal GOD, the Source of purity and truth, of light and love.

Sunday is given us especially to help us in our spiritual life. There must be some daily communion with GOD, but Sunday affords special opportunity, rest from labour, freedom from intercourse with the world's duties. It is the acceptance of our LORD'S

invitation, "Come aside, and rest awhile." It is leaving Martha's work for Mary's, sitting at the feet of her LORD. It is "mending the nets," that the fishing by-and-by may be successful. Let Sunday be the holiday of body and mind, but the working-day of the spiritual nature. It is as necessary to the soul's health as rest and change are for the health of the body and the mind. The loss or the abuse of Sunday is evidently equally injurious to a nation's well-being and a Christian man's spiritual life. GOD Himself has said to man, "Be still, and know that I am GOD;" and the truth of His words is becoming more and more evident. Hurry and rush, overwork of mind and body, these are features of the present day, and the natural consequence is atheism. Men do not know GOD because they are never "still."

Just in the same way, our LORD'S words are daily seen to be more plainly true, " Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven." The little child comes to his father in his troubles, in everything that is too much for himself. The Christian man, whatever he may be, humbleth his soul as a little child before GOD; and so GOD'S word is fulfilled, "He healeth all thy infirmities."

Just as a well-mended place is often stronger than it was before it was broken, so the penitent may be great in that very point where he was weakest. So Boanerges became the apostle of love; Peter, the patient martyr; Moses, the meekest of men; the restored cripple not merely walks, but leaps and dances.

Mental power may raise a man above his fellows; commercial success may make a man rich and influential; high office may give him power over the destiny of his country and of the world; but before his GOD the greatest man must humble himself; he

must be but a little child in the presence of his Heavenly Father. The world, with its ranks and offices, its wealth and occupations, passes away ; but each man's soul abides.

The kingdom of heaven will have its aristocracy, its princes, its leaders, its trusted authorities, its honoured heroes ; and He Who will be LORD paramount there, Who sees at one glance the coming destiny of men, and their present condition, says, " Many that are first shall be last, and the last first."

Fifth Sunday after Trinity.

THE PURSUIT OF PEACE.

ST. PETER to-day gives us in few words his judgment as to the method of securing a happy life; and apostle as he was, and friend and disciple of our LORD, he has no new invention to bring forward, nothing of his own, nothing even of our LORD's, but an old-world rule of life, which had been written in the 34th Psalm generations before. Human life, with its lights and shadows, is much the same in all ages. There is no panacea for its ills. With all our discoveries and progress, we can invent nothing better than this prescription ages old.

There are three precepts given: to guard the tongue, to prefer good to evil, and to seek peace. This last really covers with its broad hand all that is comprised in the other two, and it can stand alone, and be prescribed as a motto of Christian life, the very sum and essence of highest wisdom and prudence, "Seek peace, and ensue it."

First, we must seek peace with GOD. There has ever been among mankind a sense of sin, a feeling that there is a separation between a righteous GOD and the creature who, through passion or infirmity, has transgressed His laws. Sacrifices and many strange and painful rites attest this feeling. Man has come before GOD as a suppliant, suing for peace, and ready to pay a high price for it. How this estrangement between GOD and man has come

about has not always been understood, but the fact has been acknowledged and lamented. Man has felt responsibility to a great Master, and has looked forward to a day of reckoning and judgment, and has desired to prepare for it. There has ever been a yearning for mediation, for some third person to stand between GOD and man and effect a peace. Man has felt himself unfit to face GOD, and has entrusted his cause to advocates more worthy than himself to stand before Him and plead. There have, indeed, been a few men in old times, and in our own, who have opposed this general feeling of mankind, and who have either denied the existence of this Supreme Judge, or have argued against the certainty of a future life, or have maintained the necessity of our actions, and that there is therefore no such a thing as sin. But they have persuaded but a small section of men to adopt their theories. They seem often to have not really believed them themselves. The vast majority of thinking men have ever believed in GOD, in immortality, in sin, in responsibility, and have felt the need of peace with GOD.

These instinctive feelings of man our LORD came to systematise and to satisfy. From the day when the angels sang at His Birth, to His last words before His departure from the world, "peace" was ever associated with Him. He was the Mediator whom man had longed for. He was the Sacrifice for sin that man had felt was needed, and had tried to offer. He instituted His Church and sacraments to bring peace evermore to the sin-laden conscience, to conduct the soul through every stage of life, till the last comes and it departs in peace, reconciled to GOD, and with a sure hope of immortality in its home in the Bosom of GOD.

"Seek peace, and ensue it," next, within. It was a discovery long ago made that man was dual in

his nature; that there was conflict within, between opposing powers and conflicting wills; passions raging, and calm reason resisting; predilections demanding their gratification, and conscience sternly repeating "No;" body and spirit with antagonistic interests and aims. Wise men argued and thought and wrote as to the best way to gain peace within; and the general consensus declared that peace could only come through the victory of the higher sense over the lower, spirit over body, conscience over passion. In a word, it was concluded that peace within could be obtained only as it is to be had in the world at large, by means of war; war carried on without cessation till victory is obtained; nay, victory after victory, till the enemy is crushed and rendered impotent for future aggression. Our LORD'S word is, "What hast thou to do with peace? Turn thou behind Me;" *i.e.*, be a soldier for life.

This is not well understood, especially in this easy-going age. A large section of men merely follow the impulse of their passions and animal instincts. There is no fight, no struggle; they quietly follow the law of nature, and the higher path of the spiritual life is not even attempted. But there is no peace in this. The flesh is a hard master to serve, and there is at best a perpetual dissatisfied unrest that kills effectually all inward peace.

GOD'S saints will have none of this. We read how they have waged fierce and cruel war against their passions and infirmities; how they have used terrible mortifications, treating their bodies as enemies, and breaking down the rebellion of the flesh by, what seems to us, fierce cruelty and almost suicidal violence. But peace has come from it. They have gained the likeness of our LORD, in Whose soul perfect peace reigned, because every passion, every impulse, kept its fit place. A thought-

ful traveller says of this: "There is something very suggestive in the silence of Chimborazo. It was once full of noise and fury, as a volcano. It is now a completed mountain, and thunders no more. The reason that we are so noisy is that we are full of wants. We are unfinished characters. JESUS was silent, because He was perfect."

With most middle-class Christians there is small hope of attaining this inner peace in its entirety in this life. We have not the courage to be saints, and to secure peace by bloody, painful war upon self; and so there is only a perpetual series of petty skirmishes all through life, and all that we hope for is not to be beaten and put to shameful rout and ruin by the rebellion of our lower nature against our higher aspirations. We can but seek peace by keeping up lifelong war, relying upon GOD'S promise of "peace at the last."

There is one more application of these words, as they relate to our fellow-men. Here too, as in the last instance, the stress and emphasis of the exhortation must rest upon the means rather than upon the end; "Seek peace, and follow after it;" but do not be sure of attaining it. That which was said long ago is still found true, "When I speak to them of peace, they make them ready to battle." Some people will not be peaceable with us, do what we may. And so St. Paul says, "If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men." "It takes two to make a quarrel." Let others do what they will; let us earn the blessing of the peacemaker. Even our LORD Himself, the Prince of Peace, made enemies; we must not be surprised, then, if, with all our goodwill to men, we find ourselves sometimes treated as enemies. But, for all this, we must not give up the pursuit of peace; for even if we fail to obtain it, we shall have done well to follow after it; ay, and we shall have found a satis-

faction in the mere pursuit of it. It is said of hunting, that its chief pleasure is rather in the chase of the game than in catching it, and the words used here are taken from the vocabulary of the chase. There is pleasure in the mere ensuing of peace, even though it be not overtaken and captured. Thank GOD for this. There is, after all, no perfect peace here on earth. In all the applications of the Apostle's precept, this has come out evidently. We may have partial peace, measures of the peace of GOD; but, after all, it "passeth present understanding." It has to be sought; to be pursued; to be striven after, longed for, prayed for; but it comes not yet, it comes not here. We are still, with David, "the man of war." The reign of Solomon is not yet. We labour for peace by war. We fight and struggle and pray; and this is our cry:—

"Grant us Thy help till foes are backward driven;
Grant peace on earth;—or, after we have striven,
Peace in Thy heaven."

Sixth Sunday after Trinity.

THE SOUL'S LIBERATION FROM THE BODY.

WHEN we, with our limited powers, look out upon the world around us, and then try to picture to ourselves the eternal future of the men and women whom we meet day by day, we are speedily surrounded by, and bewildered with, difficulties that seem insurmountable. There are a few very good people, but there are many who, while they do not seem good enough for heaven, do not seem bad enough for hell. Indeed, as we grow older, and our knowledge and experience correct the hasty judgments of youth or prejudice, we feel disposed to pass a more lenient judgment upon the sins and failings of many of our fellow-sinners. We see that sterling good qualities may exist, side by side with some unfortunate failing that ruins a man's whole life. We see that external circumstances may determine a man's lot, much more than the deliberate act of his own will. We see that one mistake may blight a man's prospects, and that other persons' acts may force him into a course that would otherwise have been pursued by him. Some do not seem to have so good a chance as merely of success and of happiness, but morality, and religion. We can enter into the story of John Bradford, who, seeing a man going to execution, said, "There goes John without the grace of GOD." Fashion again

and custom account for much. Much of the church-going of the present day among the higher classes is probably due to this alone, and much of the neglect of it by the lower classes is due to no other or worse reason.

In the last century men of rank and position drank too much at dinner-parties and fought duels. These practices have disappeared; yet we must not attach too high a value to the fact, as if we were in all things superior to our ancestors. In like manner we loathe the drunkenness of the lower class, and the awful crimes and degradation that arise out of it; but at the same time we cannot shut our eyes to the certainty that all this arises from other causes than mere love of drink, and moral degradation. The overgrowth of towns, the separation of class and class, the squalid wretchedness of the dwellings in the poorer parts of great cities, our miserable climate, and the absence of all that is elevating, these all must be taken into account when we appraise justly the sins and special crimes of the lower ranks of society.

Thank GOD, the final destiny of our fellow-men does not depend upon our judgment, but upon that of Him "by Whom actions are weighed," Who knoweth the thoughts and intents of the heart, and the antecedents and surrounding circumstances of each act; Who has not only infinite wisdom, perfect love, and evenly balanced justice, as God, but Who, as Man, has made experiment of human life, and has felt in Himself the movement of passions and the pressure of external influence.

Probably, moreover, the popular ideas of heaven and hell, and of the intermediate state, are not altogether true. Doubtless a more correct judgment on these things would remove or lessen many present difficulties.

But, besides all this, there is yet another train of

thought that may help us to see how different the future life must be from that which now surrounds us, and how we ourselves and others may hereafter be so differently circumstanced as to be hardly recognisable as the same beings. Have we ever analysed the source of our actions, and seen how largely, perhaps how exclusively, many of them originate with our bodies ? St. Paul seems to recognise in himself a double existence. He stands without and watches his other and lower self acting independently, or even in opposition to his superior nature. There is, as it were, civil war in the kingdom within. The little world that exists in each of us is as much divided, and subject to conflicts and antagonism, as the great world outside. The splendid discoveries of science are always finding out more and more the marvellous powers and properties of the human body, and are proving how greatly the soul is at present dependent upon it, and how largely men's actions and thoughts are the result of the well-being or the morbid action of some fleshly organ.

Many a degraded drunkard, we are told, for example, has inherited this terrible vice, just as another man has inherited gout, or a third some peculiarly shaped feature. In one family a morbid taint ensures the appearance of consumptive tendencies, while insanity is hereditary elsewhere, or some mitigated mental derangement that leads to eccentricity, or some moral obliquity that seems to be almost irresistible. An accident, that has injured part of the brain, changes a man's whole character. Certain diseases make men irritable ; others make them indolent. The state of a man's health alters for him the whole aspect of life and everything about him. There is a story of two godless French philosophers, who, being weary of life and disgusted with their lot, determined to spend an evening together, and next morning to commit suicide. They

lamented together the miseries of humanity, and their own in particular ; they decided that life was not worth living, that the world was not fit for higher intellects like theirs, that they were not appreciated duly, that their health was failing, and that there was nothing but misery to look forward to, and that the wisest thing to do was to escape into nothingness, and make an end of their troubles. Next morning they met to carry out their determination. But one of them was now in quite another frame of mind ; he had tried, he said, a new medicine that had been recommended to him, and it had done him so much good, and he felt so well and buoyant, that he took quite a different view of life from that of the preceding evening, and he intended to live on ! We may smile or be shocked at such things, but is there not much truth in them after all ? Is any one of us quite the same person when we are in pain or wearied, as we are when the body is healthy, and we are in the midst of bright and wholesome things that make mere existence a pleasure ?

If, then, we would get an impartial verdict with respect to ourselves and our actions, we must not forget to give due weight to the influence of our animal frame, and its condition at the moment, upon our acts and impulses. We shall see what different beings we should be if these bodies were stripped away from us altogether, and soul and spirit stood by themselves, no longer trammelled and biassed by the motions of the flesh.

Nor is this quite all that should be said on this matter. Not only are many of our most prominent personal characteristics hereditary, and therefore not directly due to any choice of our will, but how many of our daily acts and failings are merely the result of our present condition, as inhabiting bodies of flesh ! Men work, mostly, not for love of work, but

because their body, and the bodies of those dependent upon them, require food, shelter, and clothing. Women fall into follies or sins because they happen to be beautiful, and are therefore admired, flattered, tempted.

If it were not for fatigue, for the time spent in eating and sleeping, how much more time should we have to give to intellectual and nobler occupations! Say it is only eight hours out of the twenty-four, yet that is one-third of our time! So the man of sixty has spent at least twenty whole years, day and night, in unconsciousness, or in the merest animal operations! Or if we venture to touch lightly upon the tremendous influence of the sexual instincts, let us think how enormous and far-reaching are the results of this merely bodily movement. Childhood, old age, disease, accident, or the surgeon's knife obliterate the whole train of circumstances that arise out of the action of certain functions of the body, which can have no place in our spiritual nature. After death, we neither marry nor are given in marriage. Have we ever thought of the consequences, proximate and remote, of this state of things, and what a vastly different life it presupposes from that of this world?

The progress of scientific discovery has shown, both in men and animals, that certain parts of the brain, or certain nerves, are the ordinary seat of particular mental powers, or are connected with certain acts or functions. If these are artificially stimulated, the results may be foreseen with certainty. Drugs, food, climate, the different periods of life, these and a multitude of other influences have a powerful effect upon the body, and so upon our actions. St. Paul bewails the animal tendencies of his body, and treats it like a beast of burden that must be brought into subjection, that it may be kept from rebellion, and made useful. Like him, other

saints of GOD have mortified the flesh, with its affections and lusts, till it has been marvellously subjected to the soul, and the soul itself has been equally strengthened, freed, and rendered independent of the down-drawing of the body. Miraculous power, such as that exercised by our LORD and others, comes probably very much from this, and was exerted at the expense of the body and its strength.

And now let us look on to the end of all this. Death comes; the soul is separated from the body, which returns to its native earth. What a release for the true servant of GOD! What a setting free of the tied and bound spirit! No more lusts of the flesh, clamouring for indulgence! No more conflict with impulses that are natural, but, except under certain circumstances, sinful. Think of the host of weaknesses, temptations, pains, limitations, that the soul is delivered from as soon as it shakes itself loose from the body. Well may the servants of GOD, who understood this, have yearned and longed for the day of their emancipation. Think of our soul, capable of motion, thought, action, untrammeled by the finite and limiting embarrassments of the corruptible flesh! Well may the Church thank GOD when her children are freed from "the miseries of this sinful world and the burden of the flesh."

But now let us say a word of caution, lest all this be misunderstood, and perverted into materialism, fatalism, or depravity that is deemed excusable. The body may die and perish, but the time that the soul has inhabited it and been influenced by it will leave its mark upon the soul, as the metal takes its shape from the mould in which it has been cast. Sin leaves its mark upon the soul. The spiritual body, that will perhaps be evolved by the soul's own action, will resemble of necessity the body of flesh; for the man is always the same, and every part and function is dependent upon the soul. A man's life

will be written upon his spiritual body, which will be the outward expression of his real inner self. And then many of a good man's unworthy acts will be seen to have begun and ended with his body, and will pass away, not affecting his soul. Many more, that have injured it, will have been pardoned by repentance, and the wounds of his soul will have been perfectly healed by the Precious Blood. Many a magnificent soul is cramped and dwarfed in a child's body, and death prevents the world ever knowing its greatness. Many a highly endowed soul is crippled and crushed within the imperfect organisation of the idiot, or the savage. Many a beautiful soul lies hid now beneath an unlovely body, and is being beautified yet more and more by daily conflict, daily victory, daily spiritual gifts; and the daily imitation of CHRIST will at last produce a soul transformed into the likeness of CHRIST; so that all the members of the Family of GOD will bear similar features, and be seen and recognised by all as the children of the same great Father; themselves evidently brethren of the Only Begotten of GOD, CHRIST JESUS.

Seventh Sunday after Trinity.

THE SECRET OF MAN'S POWER.

IT was said of man long ago that he is a paradox. There is contradiction in almost every part of his nature. He seems to be two or more persons, rather than one. His one self regards his other self, as it were, from a distance. He can speak of himself as if he were altogether outside. He is annoyed with himself; surprised, angry, impatient, with himself. He tries to persuade himself, and often fails. He is carried away into actions of which he disapproves, till he cries out in amazement and despairing vexation, "That which I do, I allow not; for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I."

Man is lord of the world, the highest animal in creation, yet in many respects how inferior he is to what he calls the lower animals! Most of them come to maturity much sooner than he. He is helpless at birth, and cannot provide himself with sustenance for years. His body needs artificial protection and prepared food, while other animals have no such requirements. He is powerless against the elements and the attacks of many very inferior creatures, which destroy his food and bring his laborious creations to an end.

But side by side with all this weakness, see the almost infinite power that man exercises. He subdues and governs the world. Vegetables and animals he takes as he wills, and from them main-

tains his own vital powers. He cultivates both, improves them, and makes them better than he finds them. He tills the ground with wonderful skill, and makes the desert to blossom as the rose. He ransacks the treasures of the earth, and makes it yield its minerals for his purposes. His ships traverse the pathless and tempestuous ocean. Steam is made his slave, and helps him to annihilate distance, and to doubt whether any difficulty is insurmountable. He can speak irrespective of distance by the telegraph. He reads the bygone history of the world, and penetrates into the star-depths of infinite space. Every victory over nature is made an advanced station and the base of still further operations, and there seems no limit to the possibilities of his progress and dominion.

Now, have we ever thought what is the secret of man's power; why it is that, with all his natural frailty and disadvantages, he can do such great things; why he is at the same time so weak and yet so strong? It will be said it is his mental power that gives him superiority over mere brute force. This is true, yet we have not yet touched the root of the matter. Is it not this, that man, though himself small and weak, yet is endowed with the faculty of discovering and of directing for his own purposes the vast powers of nature? The universe seems to be an infinite storehouse of gigantic forces; cultured man observes, reasons, acts, and finds that he can get behind these tremendous forces, and direct them very much as he pleases. The animal is tossed about by the elements, but learns nothing, and presently is killed by them. The savage man is terrified, and worships and tries to propitiate what he fancies are malignant deities. The primeval sage watched the heavenly bodies, and, filled with admiration and awe, imagined that they ruled the world and man. He noticed the strange instincts

of animals, and seeing in them that which he cannot find in himself, he thought he could detect underlying divinity, and raised altars to these unknown gods.

But now we have got beyond all this. We search out the great laws of nature, and know that they may be depended upon, and we use and direct them as a man uses and guides his horse. It is nothing that the powers of nature can crush us; we take care not to stand in their way; but we contrive that what seems in opposition should be converted into a help; just as the weight of the bird, which alone would bring it to the ground by gravitation, and the force of the wind, which alone would drive it back, are made by the bird's instinct to act together upon it so that the resultant of the opposite forces is effective in propelling the bird onward.

Such, then, is man's power. He learns what are the laws of nature, and although he is unable to resist them or to alter them, he has wisdom to use them for his purposes, and to make them work for him as his slaves.

Nor is this quite all that is done on this principle. The men whose names stand out in history are, for the most part, those who by skill or by accident have headed some great movement, that had become paramount and irresistible, like a law of nature. Attila, and such-like leaders of the incoming hosts of invaders, would have been powerless but for the mysterious impulse that drove those hosts from their homes to seek new countries. Mahomet and his successors, Godfrey and his Crusaders, Napoleon, Garibaldi, the Free Traders, and other successful leaders were one and all borne on the crest of a great wave, that they themselves did not originate. Luther, Wesley, Newman, in like manner, were but centres round which a great idea moved, which had gradually grown up in men's minds, and which

could not be kept down. They merely directed the gigantic force, being the nominal heads and leaders of what thousands desired and determined to have.

This principle is found also in individual life and experience. Successful men are not always the most gifted or the most deserving, but it has happened that they have caught a great tide-wave at its flood, and upon it have been borne on to fortune.

All this applies to religion and the spiritual life. Man is endowed with a certain amount of force; he may direct it almost as he will, or he may let it run to waste. The athlete directs it to his muscular development; the scholar, the inventor, the writer, uses up all his power in brain-work. So the saint concentrates all his natural endowments to the spiritual energies of his constitution. Some of the most remarkable Christians have in early life been active and successful in mere secular pursuits. St. Augustine before his conversion was a clever advocate; Loyola was a brilliant soldier; and many others inherited good blood and great mental powers which would have made them distinguished in some other walk of life, if they had not been great missionaries, or reformers, or men of high spiritual advancement. A child with strong passions and energies will almost certainly become a man different from the common run of men. His powers may be directed for good or for evil. There is plenty of raw material; it depends upon influences about him what the manufactured result will be.

Nor is this quite all. Beside the innate powers of the individual there is a vast storehouse of energy that the soul may make use of. There is the corporate life of the Church; there are the powers of the unseen world; there is the mighty influence of the HOLY SPIRIT and the infinite grace of CHRIST —all these are at the disposal of the Christian soul; and, feeble as it may be in itself, by these means it

may do greatest things. So St. Paul says, "I can do all things through CHRIST, which strengtheneth me." So prayer has been said to be the instrument that moves the Hand that rules the world. So Sacraments are efficacious beyond all imagining; the poor act on earth being united with the infinite act of the great High Priest before the throne Who ever liveth to make intercession. So small beginnings develop into glorious and widespread institutions, like the lad's barley loaves placed in the hand of CHRIST, sufficient to feed thousands.

We are not apostles like St. Paul, but with him we may say, "I can do all things through CHRIST, which strengtheneth me." Innate faults and failings may be conquered; graces and gifts may be obtained; works beyond our unaided strength may be accomplished, by the appropriation and direction of the great spiritual influences that are within our reach; just as men do such wonders by the aid of steam, and electricity, and gravitation, and the other great powers of nature.

Eighth Sunday after Trinity.

FALSE PROPHETS.

THE Church selects our LORD'S words for to-day's gospel which warn us against false prophets. Let us try and see what they mean. Very likely it may seem to some persons that they are obsolete and meaningless in the present day. "Prophecy has ceased," they will say; "prophets true and false are of the past, historical personages, and nothing more." But those who say this are mistaken; and their mistake probably arises from a very modern and narrow idea of the meaning of the words "prophets" and "prophecy," as used in the Bible. Literally a prophet is merely a person who speaks in another's name. In Holy Scripture it means one who speaks in GOD'S name. In GOD all truth resides. All that man knows comes from GOD; and the person who teaches his fellow-men is a prophet. Moses, Samuel, David, and many others, teachers of GOD'S ancient people, were called prophets. Even the wise among the heathen were prophets of GOD. They had some knowledge of the great eternal verities which GOD had originally imparted to man; they kept much to themselves, and left the people dark and ignorant; but when they imparted knowledge they were GOD's prophets, and St. Paul calls them so in his Epistle to Titus.

In the primitive Church there were some who by the Spirit of GOD predicted future events, but there

were also preachers and teachers whom the same Spirit enlightened and moved to speak and exhort, and lead men in the right way ; and they were also called prophets, and their utterances were styled prophesyings ; and these terms were used in that sense, at least by the educated, till quite recent times.

A false prophet, then, is one who teaches that which is not true. Truth is one, and every phase of it is precious. Error is manifold, and always harmful. All true science, all discovery, all invention, is but a little of GOD'S truth and knowledge imparted by some teacher or prophet to his fellow-men. The Astronomer, the Geologist, the Chemist, is in this sense a prophet. So was the inventor of printing ; so were the men who gave us the steam-engine ; musicians, painters, nay, all thinkers, all workers, any one who has gifts and powers, and uses them for his fellow-men's benefit, is, in a broad sense, a prophet of GOD, one who has received something from GOD'S hand, and who imparts it to others ; a channel to communicate some small rill to man, from the infinite ocean of the fulness of the wisdom and knowledge of GOD.

But there are, and always have been, false prophets ; men who teach error, either wilfully or ignorantly ; wilfully, like the priests of the old-world religions, who knew that GOD was one, spiritual, holy, yet led the people in their worship of imaginary deities, animals, stocks and stones ; wilfully, like Jeroboam's prophets, who, to keep the people from their rightful king, persuaded them to worship the golden calf at Bethel ; wilfully, like many since, the tools of kings and cunning men, who have devised new religions, or new sects for political purposes, or through ambition, or some other unworthy motive. Ignorantly, like the majority of false teachers ; ignorant, yet not less mischievous ; ignorant, but not innocent, teaching half-

truths, or errors founded on a truth, or perversions of some truth, or some phase of truth without its counterbalance that keeps it from being untrue.

There is a vulgar notion that belief is little so long as practice is right. A little reflection must show how erroneous and mischievous such a theory must be. Men's actions depend upon, and originate from, their belief. Men generally justify their acts to themselves, and persuade themselves that they are right for them, according to their ideas of right and wrong. Some of the greatest crimes have been perpetrated on this principle, and many a terrible calamity has befallen people because of the ignorance or mistake of some one else. Those awful scourges of the earth who have gathered and led huge armies, and massacred thousands, and shed blood like water, and desolated the face of the earth, and made those miserable whom GOD intended to be happy, have persuaded themselves that they were acting nobly. Attila called himself the "Scourge of GOD." Mahomet proclaimed that he alone was GOD'S prophet. Napoleon maintained that his wars were forced upon him, and that his motives were disinterested! Our LORD declared that those who persecuted His disciples to the death would think they were doing what was well-pleasing to GOD. Saul of Tarsus was quite sure that he was doing what was right and pleasing to GOD when he was martyring the first Christians. The most extravagant and mischievous theories in politics and religion are defended, and firmly believed to be true and right, by their authors and maintainers. The most degraded religions, the silliest of sects, seem good and worthy to some minds. A reasonable being does not do wrong till his mind has been biassed.

Misbelief, then, is the root and source of almost all misdeeds. A wrong belief, therefore, is worse than a wrong act, for it can produce any number of

wrong acts. So our language calls a bad man a "miscreant," which is literally a man with a wrong belief or creed. Even Satan quoted Scripture when he tempted our LORD. The Bible is true, yet all false prophets defend their errors by it. St. Paul says they did so even in his day; he says that Scripture may be "wrested," misunderstood, perverted to bad and dangerous purposes; just as everything, however good it may be, may be abused and turned into evil.

But the Bible is not the sole and only exponent of truth, and there are many false prophets who draw but little of their teaching from the Bible. Some people will swallow anything that they fancy is authorised by the Bible, and many more seem to think that anything must be true which they find in a book or newspaper. It has been said that the Pulpit has had its day, and that the Press has taken its place. This cannot be really, but practically it may be, and it is. If multitudes withdraw themselves from the influence of the Pulpit, and guide their belief and practice by the newspaper, then it is so for them. Many who are afraid of being priest-ridden are stupidly press-ridden. The newspaper is their library, their teacher, their source of light and truth, their Bible, their Church. The press arrogates to itself an irresponsible despotism. It claims infallible judgment. It judges everything human and divine, and proclaims itself above all error. And yet nearly every newspaper declares that its opponent is wrong. It is strange that men are so led by newspapers. They would think little of the writer's opinion on any question if they talked with him; but when his anonymous article appears in the paper it commands attention and influences opinion. This anonymous character of journalism is one of its worst features. It is a secret, irresponsible power,

that stabs in the dark and will not come out into the open day. It claims for itself the title of the "Fourth Estate," but it is practically merely one of the trades of the day. Its real object is to make money. It is a mere commercial undertaking, like a shop or a company. It produces, therefore, what will pay best. It has no principle but success, no limit but failure. It is like some of the despotisms of old, and uses the same secret, unjust means to secure its ends, force, suppression of defence, entire selfishness.

Many of our most thoughtful writers lament the modern system of anonymous newspapers. J. S. Mill, a man of no religion, said, "They cannot wait for success; and so they address themselves to existing opinions, instead of trying to improve them." C. Kingsley, a very liberal man, and what is called a "Broad Churchman," wrote: "The Press, *i.e.*, men who, having often failed in regular labour of any kind, establish themselves as anonymous critics of all who labour, under an irresponsibility and an immunity which no despot ever enjoyed. Professing to speak the mind of the people, they live by pandering to its no-mind, *i.e.*, its merest fancies and prejudices. I see a possibility of all government becoming as impossible in England as it has been for two generations at least in France."

"The liberty of the Press" is a much-vaunted privilege, but liberty often means license, and still more often it does not exist, for the people at large have really no opportunity of publishing their opinions; the newspapers being open only to their own party, and to those who buy the privilege with money. The majority of thinking men have no chance of making themselves heard. True liberty gives equal rights to all.

It is said that Roger Bacon discovered gunpowder, but he would not make it known, fearing

the terrible results that would come from it. The discoverers of printing might well have had similar anxieties, for it has wonderfully increased the power of propagating evil. Day by day bad books pour out from the press, and they sow seed that develops into every sort of crime and every phase of human misery and degradation.

We see, then, that this warning of our LORD'S, instead of being obsolete, has gained importance and urgency as time has gone on. We cannot stop human progress. We cannot alter the course of the world. Men must choose their guide and teacher, among the many who claim our attention. We are free, and the prophets of the day, good and bad, true and false, are free, and every one of us has to make up his mind whom and what he will believe, what is true, and what is false ; and this is often very difficult. False teachers are plausible, and have much to say for themselves. It is hard to answer their arguments, and, besides, many men have no leisure, no ability, to enter upon tedious inquiries and searching investigations. Many follow the lead of those whom they respect. Many continue in the position in which they find themselves, by birth or other circumstances. Error gains respectability by the mere passing of time ; the longer it exists, the greater its claim to consideration.

How, then, may we know the truth, and avoid being misled by false prophets ? First we must take it for certain that GOD has given a revelation to man. If this is denied, there is no stable ground to rest upon ; there are no such things as truth and falsehood, right and wrong ; one opinion is as good as another, and none can claim to be certain. Then we must bear in mind that the Church is the pillar and ground of the truth ; that the Church is GOD'S prophet to teach mankind the truth that she has received from GOD. Then we must remember our

LORD'S test of false prophets, "By their fruits ye shall know them." Times and circumstances change, but the broad principles of right and wrong do not change. Old enemies appear again with new names. Developments may take place, but the fundamental principle may still be traced. The theories that have spread degradation and ruin over the world, that have sapped the foundations of society, that have made men lose their faith in GOD and man, that have upset order and made life intolerable, these theories may be detected to-day in the teaching of many false prophets, religious, political, social. The atmosphere of Europe seems to be charged with these influences, and sober Christian men fear, as they look onward at those things that seem to be coming upon the earth. It seems to them that the way is being made for anarchy and universal disorder and chaos, the breaking up of all that is sacred, the coming in of confusion and desolation. Our LORD foretold such a time, when His preaching should be disregarded, His Church hated and crushed, and His revelation trodden under foot. His Gospel is the only cure for human ills; it alone can save the world, just as it alone can save the individual soul. But false prophets are persuading men to disregard it, and to act upon the principles that it denounces; and men believe them, and praise their saying.

This we cannot alter. We are not lords of the world; but our hearts are our own. Let us see that false prophets are not heard and obeyed there. Let CHRIST and His Gospel rule and reign within, whatever may go on without; so shall there be peace and quietness there, however the world may stagger in noisy confusion; so shall we prepare ourselves for the kingdom of GOD and His CHRIST, where truth and light prevail, and where there is perpetual peace, the peace of GOD, that passeth all understanding.

Ninth Sunday after Trinity.

THE STEWARDSHIP OF MAN.

THE parable of to-day's Gospel is usually understood to be applicable to any ordinary steward, a man placed in a position of authority and trust under some wealthy person. The sphere of the narrative is found in everyday life, and the characters are such men as are commonly met with in any community. But there seems to be another and a higher and wider interpretation, that may fairly be found in our LORD'S words, which is not generally perceived. There is One so rich that all things are His; to Whom the world and all that is therein rightfully belongs; but He has withdrawn Himself, and appears not, and He has appointed a steward to govern and manage for Him, giving him power and authority.

This rich man is Almighty GOD, and his steward is Man. We are told how GOD made man in His own image; that is, free, intelligent, capable of understanding the will and the works of GOD; how He gave him dominion over the animals and power to subdue the earth; ability to discover the laws of nature, and to direct the powers of the universe, and make them his servants. The whole history of mankind shows how all this has been fulfilled. Man has brought the earth into subjection, and made it his servant. Seeds and fruits have been cultivated, and wild things have been improved and

rendered more fitting for his use. In the same way the animals have not only been made to work for him, but their qualities have been developed, and they have been made larger, stronger, more beautiful, than they were originally. Then the metals have been discovered and used ; tools and machines have been constructed ; buildings have been erected, roads made, ships built. The fine arts, Music, Painting, Sculpture, have been cultivated, and beautiful works have been elaborated. Science, learning, and mental culture have grown and been perfected. Wonderful discoveries have been made as to the history of the earth and the nature of the universe ; Astronomy, Geology, Chemistry, have opened boundless fields of research. Printing and the Steam-engine have actually changed the whole character of human life. And every advance shows how much more may be done, and proves that man's power in the world is almost boundless. Even where his hand seemed to be tied by the laws of nature, it is seen that he can work his will ; and the sterile desert is surprised to feel the sweet influence of the rain, when canals and planting have changed the conditions and surroundings :—

“ Man He made of angel form erect,
To hold communion with the heavens above,
And on his soul impressed His image fair,
His own similitude of holiness,
Of virtue, truth, and love, with reason high
To balance right and wrong, and conscience quick
To choose or to reject ; with knowledge great,
Prudence and wisdom, vigilance and strength,
To guard all force or guile. And best of all,
The highest gift of GOD'S abundant grace,
With perfect, free, unbiassed will. Thus man
Was made upright, immortal made,
The king of all.”

Such, in fewest words, is a sketch of the powers and prerogatives of man, as GOD'S steward on the

earth. There seems scarcely a limit to that which he can do. What he has done is wonderful; but it all forms but the foundation upon which to construct more, the starting-point from which to initiate fresh and greater discoveries, till one has said, "Father of the world, what moved Thee thus to exalt a poor weak little creature of earth so high, that he stands in light a far-ruling king, almost a god; for he thinks Thy thoughts after Thee."

But if the first part of the parable finds its fulfilment in man's relation to GOD and to the world, the second part is, unhappily, no less true. This steward has "wasted the goods" entrusted to him. We have seen man's powers and prerogatives; and when we look out upon the world and see what it is, we are sure that he has wasted his opportunities and misused his powers. If it were not so, the world would be in a very different, a very much better and happier condition than it is. Read the history of any nation, and see how war has inflicted injuries and miseries unnumbered upon it. Thousands of men, in the full vigour of manhood, have been taken away from useful employments, and have been put to death, or rendered helpless and dependent. Money, that might have been the instrument for effecting all sorts of beneficial improvements, has been wasted in carrying on the work of destruction. Neighbouring countries, that might have assisted one another to promote their people's welfare and happiness, have used all their skill and energy to injure one another, and to bring ruin and misery upon the people. Fertile lands have been laid waste, smiling crops destroyed, beautiful buildings have been levelled to the ground, libraries, containing the results of man's thoughts for ages, have been consumed, and all the precious learning has perished. These are some of the more evident evils of war; but there are many more—indeed it is

hard to say where the results end, and what is the sum of the injury done to man and his happiness by war:—

“O what men dare do ! What men may do !
What men daily do, not knowing what they do !”

But man’s stewardship has other faults to show. In modern times we boast of progress, vast trade, manufacture, commerce. But there is another side to the picture. Enormous populations have been gathered together, with all the inevitable evil results. Masses of idle and vicious people are found in the low quarters of our towns, which constantly increase, till the difficulty stares us in the face how all these masses are to be fed, especially with diminishing trade and a smaller growth of food at home.

Then there are other failures of stewardship—loss of opportunity to make improvements, neglect of the use of knowledge, want of the cultivation of powers that can make the world better, injury to animals and natural productions, waste of good and precious things of a thousand kinds, and much more; all justifying the indictment that man, as God’s steward, has “wasted His goods” and failed in his duty:—

“ Each animal,
By natural instinct taught, spares his own kind ;
But man, the tyrant man, revels at large,
Freebooter unrestrained, destroys at will
The whole creation ; men and beasts his prey,
Those for his pleasure, for his glory these.”

When we see what has been done by one good man, or by a few earnest men banded together, we understand better what might be done by a nation, or by mankind at large, if they were really purposed to reform abuses, and to do good and promote real and true progress.

But the one model of stewardship is the Man

CHRIST JESUS. He came to do God's will. He was faithful in all things. He was the second Adam, under whose feet all things were put. The animals, the elements, diseases, everything was subject to Him—everything except man. And man rejected Him, and put Him to death ; putting the final stroke to his failure as steward ; for he did not recognise his Master's Son.

Such, then, is the sad story of man's stewardship of the world. There is one practical lesson to be got from it. Each one of us is a steward under GOD. We have gifts and powers, and we have to account for the use that we make of them. Some have received more, some less ; but all have received something—life, health, time, faculties. And the one difference between an ungodly and a godly life is the sense of stewardship. One man rejoices in the sense of liberty ; he considers himself his own master ; he allows nothing to interfere with his wishes. Another man always lives under a sense of duty. He feels he has a Master, to Whom he owes obedience and service, and his whole life is affected by this perpetual thought of responsibility.

Let us ask ourselves to-day which of these two kinds of life we are leading.

Tenth Sunday after Trinity.

THE HARDENED HEART.

THERE is perhaps a feeling of impatience and irritation sometimes in the minds of those who come to church, when they hear, Sunday after Sunday, the Old Testament Lessons, and find their thoughts so constantly and repeatedly directed to the history of the Israelites. "What are these old-world records to us?" they complain; "we are nineteenth century men and women; what interest or profit can be created in our minds and hearts by hearing the sayings and doings of an ignorant, narrow-minded, semi-barbarous people, who lived in a corner of the world long ago, and who had scarcely a thought in common with us in this age of progress and light?"

Now, this objection would be valid and unanswerable if our churches were lecture-halls, and if people came to them to be interested or amused, or even to be instructed in the most recent vagaries of mental speculation, in the latest theories of science, or in the newest discoveries of mechanics or chemistry. But this is not the case. We come to church, first of all, because we owe GOD honour and worship; and then, having rendered to Almighty GOD our homage, and having made our prayers to Him for our daily needs, temporal and spiritual, we are instructed in moral and spiritual truths, and our thoughts are withdrawn from the routine of this passing life, and directed to the eternal verities that

concern our higher nature, and the life beyond these short and changeful scenes.

The history of Israel, then, is most suitable for our learning. This people lived in constant and most intimate relations with GOD. They were separated from all other nations, and were ruled by other and higher principles. Everything about them, from the government of the whole State down to the daily duties of the humblest individual, was regulated with direct reference to Almighty GOD. Some nations made their chief business war and conquest, and everything was subordinated to this leading idea. Others were trading communities. Culture and art were paramount objects of pursuit elsewhere. In our own day what is generally termed Progress is the great aim of European States. But with ancient Israel none of those ends were desired or pursued. There were no manufactories; there was no shipping, no trade. The arts and sciences were ignored. There was no desire of conquest. The nation was settled down in a small, quiet, sheltered territory, and was occupied in agriculture and pastoral pursuits, without ambition and without intellectual greatness.

But insignificant and inferior as the Israelites were, compared with other peoples, in material greatness and mental cultivation, they stood alone, and far above the rest of the world, in their knowledge of the great principles of right and wrong, in their theories of life and duty, and in all that concerns the spiritual element in man's nature. It was said to them, "Ye shall be unto Me a kingdom of priests;" that is, each man was brought near to GOD, intimate with GOD, ever face to face with Him, admitted to the position confined elsewhere to the priestly caste.

We are apt to forget this; and familiar as we are with the Old Testament, we do not notice how

terribly degraded the other and more prominent nations of the world were, as compared with that little people to whom it was entrusted, and who were guided by its precepts. The marvellous light that came into the moral and spiritual world by JESUS CHRIST was really an unfolding and expansion of the knowledge already possessed by the children of Abraham. It is therefore fit and wise that the exhortation daily made to them should still be daily made to us, "To-day, if ye will hear His voice, harden not your hearts."

That wonderful people failed to rise to their high destiny. We too may fail. Prophets continually arose, and spoke to them in the name of GOD, exhorting, reproving, threatening, promising; and the Church now inherits and exercises the prophetic office, and still finds the old words most suitable for her purpose, and still echoes the old-world cry, "To-day, if ye will hear His voice, harden not your hearts."

It is incomprehensible to us, as we read the old story, how that people could have acted as they did. When Moses first called them to strike for liberty, and showed them his power and the helping Hand of GOD, they meanly turned back to their degrading servitude, not manly enough to suffer a little, that they might be free. All through their wanderings they played the same unworthy part. When they were at last settled in their inheritance, they were for ever falling away and debasing themselves. We marvel as we read their annals. They were spoken to so plainly; they were directed so unmistakably; and yet they went wrong. The higher and nobler path was straight on before their eyes, but they swerved aside into crooked ways, that only led downwards to ruin. And to-day they stand forth before the eyes of mankind, a living lesson, a silent, eloquent, warning to all who will hear

and understand. A Hand ever points to the Jew, and a Voice cries to all GOD'S children, reasonable, free, immortal, "To-day, if ye will hear His voice, harden not your hearts."

How did they harden their hearts? How are we in danger of such-like hardening? First actual sin did it to them, and may do it to us. Their Law was holy, just, and good, but they transgressed it, following instead the lower animal law of instinct. We too have a Law of life, higher, purer, clearer, than that of Sinai; and men and women neglect it, outrage it, and as they do so their poor hearts harden, till they become beasts' hearts, and they can in no wise lift up themselves. There is a vague sense of the presence of GOD in the world. There is a feeling that the eye of the pure CHRIST is upon us. There is an atmosphere still of Christianity, even in the midst of its rejection and its perversion; and all this causes shame at open evil-doing; but it does not stop secret evil-doing. Every now and then the veil is lifted, and in law-courts and in whispered scandals that which is going on is made known, and we do not wonder that men's and women's hearts have grown hard whose daily living is such as we learn it is. The strong man armed keepeth his palace; he warns off the messengers who would disturb the deadly peace of his subjects. The good seed falls on a hardened highway; then cometh the devil and taketh away the Word, lest they should be converted.

The Gospel to-day reminds us that the Temple must be cleansed of its thievish tenants before the CHRIST will teach daily there. Even the Old Testament prophet knew and said that the Spirit of GOD cannot dwell in a heart that is given to sin. David, with all his high spirituality, through one gross sin, lived a whole year with a hardened heart, impenitent. Till men have heard the Baptist

preach repentance, and have been baptized of him, confessing their sins, they cannot become the disciples of CHRIST. They have not even the wish to be saved from their sins. Let us say it boldly—much of the so-called scepticism and unbelief of the day is but the natural outgrowth of unrepented sin. There is no match for that in making the heart hard and keeping CHRIST at arm's-length. Men and sects invent all sorts of substitutes, but GOD'S rule stands now, as it has ever stood unalterably, "He that leadeth a godly life, he shall be My servant."

Next, perhaps, there comes mere frivolity, aimless butterfly-living, smiling, lounging, joking, sneering, being amused, drifting hither and thither with any current, life without purpose, without duty, without sacrifice, impatient of anything serious, ever changeful, never looking upwards, but only around at things and persons that flit by each moment. There seems nothing malignant in this sort of life, but it has wondrous power to harden men's and women's hearts, and to prevent them from hearing GOD'S voice. Try and move these people to do anything for GOD or man, anything unselfish, any self-sacrifice, anything CHRIST-like, and you will soon see how hard those hearts are that beat in the full light of their much-vaunted culture.

Neglect of GOD'S own means for keeping the soul alive, and the conscience quick is another sure means of hardening the heart. GOD'S voice is heard, speaking by man's lips. GOD's prophet comes and says, "I have a message for thee;" but the man's companions sneer and say, "Wherefore came this mad fellow to thee?" Herod sends for the Baptist, and hears him gladly; but Herodias and her daughter soon put a stop to that. Felix hears, and trembles. Agrippa is almost persuaded. But they do not like it, and they do not put them-

selves in the way of such experiences again. To-day people go to church once a week, if it is quite convenient. They often go away before the sermon, lest they should hear a word from GOD, and be turned from sin and self and the world to their true LORD. They never read their Bibles. They do not give ten minutes a week to serious thoughts. They do not pray, and examine their conscience, and confess their sins and failures before they lie down to sleep. They keep away from the Holy Communion. What can happen but that their hearts should be hardened? It is but one of nature's inevitable laws. Let the skilful musician lay aside his instrument for but a few weeks, and he will tell you that his hands begin to lose their cunning. What becomes of our school and college Latin and Greek when we have been a few years in the army, in the office, or in some other employment? It is a law of nature that use strengthens, that neglect weakens, our powers. Is there no similar law that rules our moral and spiritual nature? Do we not see—ay, do we not know by sad experience—that there is such a law?

To-day, then, hear His voice, lest your hearts be hardened, till you cannot hear. He speaks in your hearts more often than into your ears. The voice of conscience reproves, rebukes, exhorts. GOD'S voice is heard otherwhere than in Church. Sometimes it shames us at the sight of men—better men than ourselves. Sometimes it warms and stirs the still-living good within us, and makes us say, "I will turn over a new leaf." Sometimes there comes a thought, we know not whence, that haunts and possesses us, and tells us that we were made for better things, and that we are living unworthily. Sometimes there comes a deep sense of guilt, and the words rise unconsciously to our lips, "GOD be merciful to me, a sinner." Some have made their

hearts very hard already. GOD'S voice sounds dimly, as the deaf and the old scarcely hear what is said. And of some there seems no hope; for they are as though they had lost all spiritual sense, all desire for light and life and GOD. But oh! if still you can hear, then there is hope and life yet. Be your response, "Speak, LORD, for Thy servant heareth;" and what He saith unto you, that do. The steps upward must be taken one by one. Take the step to-day which His Hand points out to you.

Eleventh Sunday after Trinity.

THE BROOK IN THE WAY.

THERE is a unanimous testimony among critics that the one hundred and tenth Psalm relates to CHRIST. Hebrew commentators and Christians alike find the MESSIAH in it. Ancient writers and modern are here agreed. Our LORD quotes the psalm, and applies it to Himself. St. Paul in his Epistles, St. Luke in the Acts, and the writer of the letter to the Hebrews all ascribe it to David, and interpret it without hesitation as prophetic of CHRIST. Some of the early Jewish writers say that it depicts the MESSIAH as an earthly victor, pursuing His vanquished enemies, and pausing for a moment to quench His thirst at a mountain torrent, and then hurrying on again, refreshed and strengthened, for the more complete slaughter of His flying foes. Christian commentators are more disposed to discover the wonderful humiliation of the Son of GOD; how in His Incarnation He stooped very low, and how GOD has exalted Him as Man; how "He made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross, wherefore God hath highly exalted Him, and given Him a name which is above every name, that at the name of JESUS every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth."

Philadelphia 11. 1861.

But there seems to be another and yet more practical force in the last words of the psalm, a holding up of the Man CHRIST JESUS as our pattern and exemplar, a setting before us the great truth that as He was, so must we be in the world; a teaching us how to live the CHRIST-like life now, that we may be where He is hereafter, and share the glory of His exaltation.

The Christian solution of the great riddle of life is found in CHRIST, the incarnate GOD, the perfect Man. In that Life of our life all phases of human life find their exemplar. The Christian ascetic takes CHRIST as His model; he learns from Him to forsake father and mother, to be ignorant of the sweet solace of wife and child, to toil and suffer for others, to bow his will to obedience, to sacrifice his liberty, to crucify the flesh with its affections and lusts. He has not the cold, hard, self-seeking mortification of the Oriental recluse; his self-sacrifice makes him sweet and gentle, gracious and helpful to others and to the world; he compels none to do as he does; he despises not those who follow another rule; he loves, respects, honours all, but he is more than content with his chosen lot, for he feels that he has accepted his LORD'S call to his heart, "Follow Me;" and as he follows closer and closer, his heart burns, he is amazed, he has consolations that words cannot express, he has heaven already, for he is with GOD! *John*

But equally the Christian man living in the world takes CHRIST as his model. In his work he finds companionship with JESUS the Carpenter. In friendship he imitates JESUS Who loved Lazarus and Martha and Mary and John and Peter. To his marriage-feast he invites the Guest Who sat at the bridal banquet at Cana. His children he brings to Him Who took little ones up in His arms and blessed them. In his troubles he makes a friend

and confidant of the Man of Sorrows; and he can find solace also in kindly human intercourse, as JESUS sought the friendly roof at Bethany when enemies compassed Him about, and His hour of darkness was lowering down upon Him.

Man and woman, the busy, the silent sufferer, rich and poor, learned and ignorant, the first age and the nineteenth century, all sorts and conditions of Christian men, find in CHRIST their model and pattern, and, following Him, pass through life safely and with peace, threading the devious ways led by a clue palpable only to each by himself, His eye, His voice, His footsteps, His Spirit.

The last verse of this psalm is a parable of such a life. See how full it is; how much is implied in these few words, "He shall drink of the brook in the way." This life, then, is not an end, but only a way, a journey, a pilgrimage. The Christian man finds his father and progenitor in Abraham, the man of faith, the homeless, landless wanderer, called out and going he knows not whither, his only property a grave. The world to him is not a home, but, as it were, an inn, and he a "guest that tarrieth but a day." The child looks on, and life seems inexhaustible, and he is eager for the joys that seem to lie in long-drawn vistas, and to be without bound or end. But the mature see how many of those bright visions fade, as the mirage of the desert fades; how some transform themselves into sorrows; how short and transient the actual and the best are. And he who is taught of GOD is not angry, or soured, or even disappointed; he knew what to expect. The traveller knows the inconveniences and pains of travel. The Christian knows that he is "in the way," and does not expect home-comforts.

And more than this; being "in the way," that is, on a journey, implies fatigue. Those who have travelled for pleasure know the inevitable penalty

of weariness. How much more do other travellers have to endure! The soldier on the march, the sailor upon the storm-tossed ocean, the emigrant, the scientific explorer; even the man of business. JESUS, we are told, was weary, footsore, and travel-stained while He went on His mission-journeys. And if His poor body was so tired, how much more must His human soul have sickened with weary pain! And so He cries, "Oh, faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you? how long shall I suffer you?"

And we, who are "in the way" now, do we not know what weariness of the spirit is? Do we not sometimes long for rest? The worries, the daily troubles of life, the disappointed hopes, the infirmities of the body, the unkindness of the world, the giving up of hope, the impatience with our ourselves, the heart's bitterness that is hugged and hidden, and that our dearest friend wots not,—do not these make us very weary sometimes?

Then this "drinking of the brook in the way" implies thirst. JESUS, weary with His journey, sat beside the well at Sychar, and longed for a draught of water, which He could not get. JESUS, upon the Cross, cried in His last agony, "I thirst," and no one gave Him water; but one thrust roughly against His sore lips a sponge filled with smarting vinegar and bitter gall.

We must understand the exigencies of Oriental travel in order to know the full meaning of this thirst, and what it symbolises—the dryness of spirit, the insatiable thirst for something wanted but not obtainable, the painful instinct within, that craves incessantly, instantly, for some solace that nothing of this world's best can soothe or satisfy. "My soul is athirst for GOD;" the "hunger and thirst after righteousness," these come to those who are "in the way," and only those who have ex-

perienced them know what they are ; the thirst of the soul that is dried up like a potsherd ; the heart that is wounded within, and is shedding its life's blood upon the Cross, as it seems, forsaken of GOD.

But is this all ? Thank GOD, no. Let us hear David's prophetic words again, "He shall drink of the brook in the way ; therefore shall he lift up his head." The weary man then finds rest ; the thirsty kneels by the cool, gushing brook, and the water is more delicious to him than the most precious juice of the grape. New life comes to him as he drinks, and lifts him up again, ready and brave for his journey.

Yes, yes ; human life is not all shadow, all pain, all sorrow. Men would not cling to life, as they do, if it were so. Even the aged, the stricken with torturing disease, desire to live a little longer. Life at its worst is still life, and human instinct knows it is good :—

"The weariest and most loathèd worldly life
That age, ache, penury, imprisonment,
Can lay on nature, is a paradise
To what we fear of death."

If each heart knows its own bitterness, there is also for each a joy that no stranger intermeddleth with. There are not many ecstatic joys. There are not many days or even hours of unmixed happiness and joy, but how much quiet pleasure does the most ordinary life afford ! Of how many may it not be said—

"Along the cool, sequestered vale of life,
They keep the noiseless tenor of their way" !

There is not the costly sumptuous banquet of delicacies, of rare viands and mellowed wines, but there is the "drinking of the brook in the way." Are not these some of life's pleasant experiences,

the love of relations and friends, the quiet, restful security of home, sleep, health, nature's beauties, travel, reading, music, peace, modern culture ?—

“The times we live in, evermore too great
To be apprehended.”

Then, besides these common daily satisfactions, each of us has his own special tastes and gratifications, that make many a bright hour in our every-day life. We are apt to forget these good things, and not to value them duly till we lose them. The absence of pain, the unconsciousness with which limbs and organs fulfil their functions, telling that all is well—this is remembered with surprise when pain haunts us, when we cannot do what once was matter-of-course. Sight, hearing, digestion, full use of limbs and faculties, the bounding elasticity of youth, the mental and bodily vigour of middle life, these are hardly valued as they deserve while they are our own, but are seen to be good indeed when we are deprived of them.

Let us try to be wise, then, and take a bright and grateful view of life as it passes, pausing a moment sometimes to think, and thank GOD for these common things, “drinking of the brook in the way, and so lifting up our heads :”—

“Such happy hearts are wandering, crystal clear,
In the great world where men and women dwell ;
Earth's mighty shows they neither love nor fear ;
They are content to be ; while I rebel.
Out of their own delight dispensing cheer,
And ever softly whispering, ‘All is well.’”

Let us take a graver thought from all this. There is a tendency in the present day to be greedy of pleasure, to pitch our tent, as it were, by the brook-side, and waste time in idle dreaming, if not in wanton pleasure long drawn out, till pleasure ceases to gratify, and brings satiety and nausea :—

"If all the year were playing holidays,
To sport would be as tedious as to work."

For,

"A man of pleasure is a man of pains."

The wiser pilgrim drinks, and passes on; rests awhile, then rises, and breasts the hill, and plods steadily over the long plain, looking onward ever to the end, his home.

Nor must we forget that the soul needs rest and refreshment "in the way." "If any man thirst, let him come unto Me and drink." Israel found water in the desert, issuing from the rock; and for us that Rock is CHRIST. "Come unto Me," He says, "ye that are weary, and I will refresh you;" for He Himself is "the Way." So we come duly with faith and obedience to His holy Table; there we "drink of the brook in the way, and therefore lift up our heads." We turn aside out of the busy ways of life for a little while, and rest, and are quiet, like Mary at the feet of our LORD. We meet Him, as He has promised, "when two or three are gathered together in His name," and return to the dusty, noisy thronged thoroughfares of the world, "carrying music in our hearts," sustained in all the greatness of the way, neither weary nor faint, able to endure to the end.

Twelfth Sunday after Trinity.

- THE PROPHETIC OFFICE.

AHAB'S denunciation of Micaiah, "I hate him, for he doth not prophesy good concerning me, but evil," is a very common, because a perfectly natural sentiment. Self-love is universal, and any person who wounds it is liable to be disliked. Human nature enjoys to be flattered. Praise is sweet, even if conscience says it is not deserved. The bearer of good tidings is always welcome, and there is an involuntary aversion to the person who brings warning of coming misfortune.

Ahab had counted Elijah his enemy, for the same reason that he hated Micaiah. Wealth and high position make men especially impatient of contradiction, rebuke, and warning of impending trouble. They are "so tender of rebukes that words are strokes, and strokes death to them." See a dog disturbed when it has a bone, or is lying asleep in the sun ; it resents the interference with its enjoyment ; it is ready to snarl at or bite any one who meddles with it. Just so mere animal human nature rejoices in ease, pleasure, security, and resents the loss of these, and turns with hatred and revenge upon the person who deprives it of them.

Against this deep-seated feeling prophets of GOD, moral teachers, and even friends of learning, of progress, of reformation, have always to contend. There is a phrase which describes their labours as

"uphill work ;" for just as gravitation steadily pulls against the person who climbs uphill, or would carry anything from a lower to a higher level, so the downward tendency of human nature maintains an increasing resistance to those who would raise it to something above mere animalism. The little child screams and fights its mother while she does what is necessary for its health and development. The boy looks upon his schoolmaster as his natural enemy. The young man pours ridicule and contempt on the friendly adviser, who warns him against idleness, indulgence, and frivolity. The ignorant hate new inventions. The degraded oppose with brutal violence all attempts to purify and ennable their condition. The single-minded man or woman, who has no other object but to benefit others, has always to experience this insen-sate opposition, and to suffer at the hands of those whom they try to help and improve. So well is this understood, that men of the world excuse themselves from helping others by the plea that they will get themselves into trouble. A Chinese proverb says, "Do no good, so shalt thou get no evil." It is a common opinion among sea-going people that it is unlucky to save a drowning man, for he will become your enemy.

There is no advance in civilisation, in knowledge, in invention, in morality, that has not had to fight and force its way to victory. There is not one benefactor or reformer who has not had to suffer pain and anxiety. There is no improvement that has not cost its promoters sighs and tears and blood. "If the angel Gabriel were to come down from heaven and head a successful raid against the most abominable and unrighteous vested interests which this poor old world groans under, he would most certainly lose his character for many years, probably for centuries, not only with the upholders of the said

vested interests, but with the respectable mass of the people he had delivered."

And that which goes on in communities happens also in each human breast. All men are not grovelling, sensual, debased. There are noble aspirations, restless longings, brilliant thoughts, that are conceived in the hearts or minds of human beings of every rank, and of every period of the world's history; and when these good and noble things struggle for birth, they are met by counter powers that would strangle them, and crush out the life that throbs and strains upward. Sometimes the man is not equal to the demands made upon him. He has genius, but slothfulness spoils all. He has talents, but he gives way to bad habits and low companions; he has the aspirations of a saint, but the flesh is weak, and he passes through life a very poor creature after all. And nothing will so irritate such men as reflection upon their besetting fault. The friend who, with kindest intention, remonstrates; the admirer who sees the latent power, and would lend a helping hand to remove the obstacle to its development; the loving heart that would rouse the being it adores to take its due and proper place, these are counted as enemies for their pains. Scientific moralists tell us that we may most surely discover our besetting fault by noticing what it is that we most bitterly resent being interfered with; what gives us most intolerable pain when it is but lightly struck.

So the truly great and noble are those who, in spite of opposition within and without, have struggled onwards and upwards to their ideal, who have conquered the lower passions of their nature, who have preferred duty to pleasure, what is right to what is agreeable, what is high and noble to mere indolent letting things alone; who welcome him as friend who helps them to mend their faults, for "A reproof entereth more into a wise man than

a hundred stripes into a fool ; " and " They best can bear reproof who merit praise : " —

" When we invite our best friends to a feast,
'Tis not all sweetmeats that we set before them ;
There's something sharp and salt, both to whet appetite
And make them taste their wine well ; so methinks,
After a friendly, sharp, and savoury chiding
A kiss tastes wondrous well."

But all men are not equal to this. The way of the world is otherwise. Noah and Lot were mocked and disregarded when they protested against the sins of their day. Moses could not rouse his down-trodden countrymen to make a stand for liberty. The whole succession of prophets had the thankless duty of denouncing the popular vices, and trying to recall Israel to its high vocation. How hard the task was we may see from the case of Jonah, who fled away rather than be the messenger of ill tidings. And many a one in public and in private life since has let evil take its course, too weak to stand against the tide, too timid to rebuke, held back by fear of the consequences of his interference.

That such fears are not unfounded our LORD'S life proves. He came into the world, in one sense, as a human prophet, a representative of GOD, not merely to teach the truth, but to reprove error and sin ; and His unflinching consistent testimony cost Him His life. If He had appeared in Athens, or in Rome, in Tyre, or in Babylon, His fate would have been the same. He selected the time and the people most likely to be favourable to Him ; but, after all, the case was not JESUS with the Jews, but the upright Man with the fallen world ; GOD confronted with human nature. There was nothing specially wicked in the prevailing sins of our LORD'S time among the Jews ; there were worse countries and deeper vices ; but as GOD'S Prophet, as a pure Man, as a Patriot, as a Reformer, His task was to speak

evil concerning the evil-doers before His eyes ; and this made the evil-doers hate Him.

John Baptist was martyred for the same cause. And many after him had a similar experience. And even where no rebukes are uttered, the silent protest of a high and stainless life in the midst of general laxity and vice will not be tolerated, but will cause hatred and violence. Bad men will labour by every means to corrupt a pure and innocent youth, and like Joseph and Daniel and many more, men will be hated only because they are better than those around them.

Now, let us see the practical issue of all this as it applies to ourselves and our own day. If this principle of reformation is found in all ages of the world, it must surely exist now. In point of fact it not only exists, but it has been concentrated and systematised. The Catholic Church is the ever-living embodiment of the principle of reformation. The Church is CHRIST, perpetually living, preaching, rebuking, and withal holding up a higher pattern to raise human nature and to shame men into godliness. Every prophet of the Old Testament is more or less a type of the Church. The prophetic office of the Church can never be in abeyance. She has other functions, but we must not forget that she has this. She reads the Bible, in proof that she holds the same office that is there described, in the life and words of GOD'S prophets of every age. Her preachers have to do with the sins of their day just what the prophets did with the sins of theirs. It has been said that that only is a good sermon which makes those who hear it uncomfortable. It ought to tell people of their faults and bring their sins to remembrance ; to hold up a high ideal, so as to make them ashamed, dissatisfied, and to send them to their knees before GOD with confession of sin and vow of amendment.

But if this does not come from faithful preaching, there will come Ahab's conclusion, "I hate him, for he does not speak good concerning me, but evil." A man once excused himself to a clergyman for not going to church on Sunday by saying that he found it the only day upon which he could make up his private accounts; and was answered, "You may find, sir, that the Day of Judgment is to be spent in exactly the same manner."

But just as in Micaiah's days there were false prophets, so are there in all times. And the broad features of their message is the same in every age. GOD'S minister crosses human nature; the false prophet panders to its inclinations. To-day Zedekiah does not make him horns of iron, but he writes novels, publishes newspapers, and gives lectures. He gilds vice, and calls deadly sins by poetic names; he invests transgressors of the laws of GOD and man with interesting and attractive features, and makes us love and pity the murderer, the adulterer, and the swindler; while the pure and upright are made ridiculous and contemptible. The false prophet of to-day assumes that every one is sensual, selfish, false; and enforces the comfortable doctrine that our inclinations were not intended to be crossed, and that probably, after all, there is no judgment to come. Just as Ahab found four hundred prophets ready to say what he wished, so now-a-days there is no difficulty in finding defenders for every sort of laxity of morals, every lust of mind or body, that man or woman desires to gratify.

And each one of us must take his side. It cost Micaiah his liberty to be on GOD'S side. It has cost prophets and martyrs and righteous men and women in all ages loss and pain and death. It will cost us something, too, to gainsay the world, to resist the flesh. We are not called to martyrdom; perhaps we are not equal to it; we are probably

not worthy of it; but at least let us not think that any strange thing happens to us if, when we do good, we suffer for it; or if the right path is not always the easier and pleasanter of two that are open to us; or if in our everyday lives, at work, or at home, we find that because we are Christians, and that we may not cease to be Christians, we must of our own free will and choice take up the Cross, when human nature and voices round us, in many tones, and with many well-turned arguments, bid us spare ourselves and let the Cross alone.

Thirteenth Sunday after Trinity.

"GO AND DO."

"Go and do ;" this was our LORD'S practical conclusion to His sermon on our duty to our neighbour. This was the conclusion to all His sermons. This is still the only good conclusion to all sermons, "Go and do." Hear first, then "go and do." Learn something, then "go and do" it. If the sermon holds up a good example, like that of the Good Samaritan, then "go and do" like him. If it sets forth an example of ill-doing, like the unjust steward or the rich fool, then "go and do" differently. If it be a call to repentance, then "go and do" repentance for yourself, for no one can do it for you. If it holds up the mirror to your past life, and recalls to your memory wrong to GOD and man, then "go and do" as much undoing as may be, like Zaccheus, restoring fourfold.

When the people of various classes and occupations had listened to St. John Baptist preaching in the wilderness, they came to him one and all with the question, "What shall we do?" It has been well said that the result of a good sermon is to make people uncomfortable; that is, to set them doing something. The modern theory of public worship is different; indeed it is simply that of people sitting still while something is done for them, and then going away with the comfortable feeling that they have done with religion for the week. Prayers are said, and people listen to them or not. Preaching follows, and they listen to it, criticise it, find fault with it, or bestow patronising approval upon it; and then

they return to what is to them the reality of life, eating and drinking, pleasuring, money-getting and money-spending. Why, this poor Jewish lawyer who came to our LORD knew better than these Christians how to come to a teacher. He said, "What shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?" He was not so foolish as to suppose that he had nothing to do, that everything would be done for him. Nobody ever conceived this consummation of folly till these last days. The heathen, ancient and modern, the Buddhist, the Mohammedan, every earnest thinking man that has had a notion of GOD and man, of sin and salvation, each have begun with the assumption that he has something to do; that what is so well worth having is not to be had for nothing; that another and a higher life must demand some preparation, some fitness. Every analogy of this life, every revelation, true or imaginary, declares this. It will not bear examination, it is clearly contrary to reason and common-sense, that the modern easy-going theory about religion can be true. But then most people do not reason, and common-sense is a very uncommon gift. CHRIST says, "Go and do;" the popular teacher says you have nothing to do.

All old religions were religions that exacted a good deal from those who accepted them. The newest religion bids for favour on the score of cheapness. It promises the same results at a lower cost, like some mountebank doctor, or some mendacious advertising tradesman, or some bubble company. Its very tempting offers makes us suspect that it is utterly unsound and delusive, and can only end in ruin.

"Go and do." What does your religion make you do? What do Sundays lead to in the week? What comes of all the sermons you hear? One poor device is to sneer and joke about sermons, trying to be witty, and only succeeding in being

profane or silly. Remember that it is a serious thing to hear sermons. They never leave us exactly as they found us. They are GOD'S message to us. They are GOD'S reply to our question, "What shall I do to inherit eternal life?" Shut your eyes to the man, and your ears to his peculiarities, and try and hear GOD'S voice to your own soul. Old George Herbert's words are the words of many before him, and they are wise and good words:—

" Judge not the preacher, for he is thy judge.
If thou mislike him, thou conceivest him not.

Do not grudge

To pick out treasures from an earthen pot.

The worst speak something good.

Jest not at preachers' language or expression;

God sent him, whatsoe'er he be. O tarry,

And love him for his Master. His condition,

Though it be ill, makes him no ill physician.

Whom oil and balsams kill, what salve can cure?"

A greater than he spoke of the "foolishness of preaching;" and yet it is GOD'S instrument to lead men to eternal life. The same words are foolishness to some, and the savour of life to others at their side. The Parable of the Sower teaches us that; the Sower the same, the Seed the same, but the Ground different, and the Harvest therefore different.

"Go and do." Let these words be our motto, GOD-sent, this week. Not talk; not be idle; not hope when there is no good ground for hope; not theorise, and wish, and day-dream; not waste time in that which is really doing nothing; not leave undone the more important to attend to the less important work. This life is a grave and serious reality. The life to come is yet more grave and serious. "Go and do." Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. Your religion has first to be learnt, then to be practised. There are many who have not mastered their A B C yet. There are many who play truant from CHRIST'S school, and have as yet

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learned nothing. The language of the heavenly Jerusalem is a foreign tongue that must be mastered here; the customs of the country have to be learned beforehand. There is inheritance there to be purchased at a good round price; there are friends to be made. Oh, how much has to be done to fit us for heavenly citizenship; and oh, how short the time is!

Well may the Master say, "Go and do; go and do," urgently, repeatedly, imperatively. He has done His part, but He cannot do ours. It may be little by the side of His, as we know it is of no value without His; but done it must be, or we and it will be undone together. Do you say, "What am I to do?" If you can do nothing else, go and pray. We read more than once of those who did this, and that then one was sent to them to tell them what to do next. Many are all behind with their work because they have not yet learned to pray. "Praying's the end of preaching," as George Herbert says again; and prayer is work.

And then there comes for earnest and obedient souls another word from their LORD, another meaning of the command, "Go and do;" "Do this in remembrance of Me;" do this with penitence and faith, and so take a step towards eternal life; and then open your eyes to see the next duty. It will not be far to seek. As you journey, you, like the Good Samaritan, will soon come to a wounded man lying by the wayside, robbed, and left to die. Attend to his wants, and you will have enough to do for some time.

And now raise up that poor dying man; look into his face; do you recognise those features? Ah! I thought so; they are your own! It is yourself; it is your own poor soul that lies half dead, and you did not know it! But the Word of GOD preached has been, as St. James says, a glass to show you yourself. Look again, and "go and do;" and see that you do not straightway forget once more "what manner of man you are."

Fourteenth Sunday after Trinity.

THE THREE PARABLES ON PENITENCE.

THE ministry of CHRIST was a mission to sinners. Men who had no sense of sin could see nothing attractive in Him; they only contemptuously nicknamed Him "the Friend of sinners." So to-day self-sufficient men first get rid of the belief in man's sinfulness, and then soon lose belief in CHRIST. "JESUS CHRIST came into the world to save sinners." The HOLY GHOST now convinces men of sin, and then they turn instinctively to CHRIST, as the sick man turns to the physician. All men are sinners, but some go bravely on, with health and business and pleasures, with no look inward at their own hearts, with no look upward to GOD'S purity, with no look onward to the day when the two will be brought together. They feel no fear of sin, no sense of sin, no need of pardon; and the longer this goes on the less likely it is that they will ever be different. They get on very well without CHRIST. He and they are strangers to one another.

But sinners "draw near" to Him; those who are "weary and heavy laden;" those who would be rid of sin. There has been, all the world over and in every age of man's history, a sense of sin. It makes savage man afraid of gods and ghosts, that seem to haunt and torment him. It makes more cultured races believe in a judgment to come. It has taught widely separated races of men mortifica-

tion and self-punishment. It has inspired teachers, whom millions reverence, to imagine transmigrations of sinful souls through many suffering lives, till their guilt had been worked out or burned out. But CHRIST taught that sin could be pardoned by the Almighty and All-merciful, not by the sinner's torture, but by the word of his Creator, by the love of his Father. He declared sin to be a disease of the soul, just as there are diseases of the body; and to prove that He, the Son of Man, had power on earth to forgive sin, He healed bodily diseases with a word before men's eyes, and He taught by parables from nature the whole system of the healing of the ills of the soul.

In the fifteenth chapter of St. Luke's Gospel there are three consecutive parables that contain the whole wondrous scheme of the pardon of sin through CHRIST. Each parable is complete in itself. Each teaches some special and peculiar truth; but it is only by taking the three together that we grasp the full revelation by CHRIST of GOD'S will with respect to forgiveness of sin. Most of the great errors in religion have arisen from taking up some one text of Scripture, and ignoring the rest; putting asunder what GOD hath joined together. So these three parables, uttered by our LORD one after the other and in inseparable connection, must not be divided, or they will be misunderstood. In the first two parables, the Lost Sheep and the Lost Piece of Silver, we see the love of GOD in seeking His lost and sinful creature. In the third parable, that of the Prodigal Son, we are taught the sinner's part, repentance, turning to GOD with confession, sorrow, and desire of pardon and amendment. The first two would be incomplete, and even misleading, if taken by themselves; for the Coin and Sheep are senseless and impassive. They seem to be sought and found without any will or effort of their own.

These parables, taken alone, may be made to teach Calvinism and fatalism ; but the Prodigal's penitence, his toiling return, his tearful outpouring of the tale of his folly, his humble cry for punishment and pardon, all this corrects any such danger. So the parable of the Prodigal, if taken alone, would leave us without any knowledge of the merciful work of CHRIST and of the HOLY SPIRIT, seeking the lost and stirring up the heart to contrition. The three parables together show what it costs to save a soul, how each Person of the blessed Trinity works ; that just as it was said, "Let us make man," so Father, Son, and HOLY GHOST severally share in man's redemption and restoration.

In the parable of the Prodigal we see the Father's love ; in that of the Good Shepherd, the mission of the Son ; in that of the lost Piece of Money, the work of the HOLY GHOST in the Church ; the woman searching as the Shepherd searches, and by means of light that has been put into her hands.

There is a series and a climax in the three parables, to lead us up, step by step, to the full sense of the value of the soul, as it has been gradually revealed. There is first one sheep lost out of one hundred ; then one piece of money out of ten ; and finally one son out of two. A man with a whole flock of sheep is rich, compared with the widow with but ten pieces of silver. The loss of the sheep is little compared with the loss of the tenth part of the poor woman's all. But what is either of these to the loss of a son, one of two ?

Just in the same way, the guilt of sin is taught gradually. The sheep is but a beast, stupid, easily led astray ; it wanders naturally, it is lost accidentally ; there is nothing wilful, nothing wrong, in the act. So many sinners "err and stray like lost sheep ;" they know not what they do ; children, ignorant people, and such like. But the next parable

has a new idea. The money is precious, and ought to be carefully kept. It bears the image and superscription of the King; it will be injured and defaced by dirt and damp. So sinners waste their talents, deface the image of GOD on their souls, and are so careless of that which is most valuable, that it slips out of their hands, and they do not perceive it, and they are left poor indeed.

But all culminates in the Prodigal's guilt. It is not an animal, but a man; not a coin, but a reasonable creature; not one misled, but a wilful wanderer. It is not a master that is forsaken, but a father. The Sheep and the Coin are what they were before they were lost; but the Prodigal has wasted money and time, and debased himself, till even his own conscience demands that he shall take a lower place than that which once was his. The Coin lay still where it had been dropped; the Sheep did not wish to be lost; but the Prodigal had wilfully made his return difficult, by distance, by deeds of shame, by a degraded state of starvation and nakedness that he scarce dared show to friends and relations. Here is deep sin from which return is so hard; sin that makes the moral or the not-found-out cry shame and bar the way to reconciliation; sin that brings misery enough, and remorse most bitter, but from which many a man and woman has not courage to flee, and from it to come into respectable company, or to face the world's sneers and the looks of the untempted and the self-righteous.

All these kinds and degrees of sinfulness are ever existent, and the merciful work of GOD is always going on to save the sinners. The Good Shepherd is seeking the lost Sheep. The Church has lighted her candle to shed its bright rays upon the dark places of men's hearts, where there is still a coin hid bearing the image of the great King, still having pure and undefaced metal enough to reflect

the light, and to direct the searching eye and the outstretched hand of the rescuer. The father is waiting for the returning son, seeing him afar off, running to meet him, eager to pardon.

Yes ; but, alas ! there is something more to be said ; there is another side of the picture. There is for the Sheep, the prowling lion ; for the lost Coin, the ruined house that buries all for ever ; for the Prodigal, that does not return, the slave's cheerless, shameful life and miserable death ; there is for sinners that will not "draw nigh," the dreadful word, "Depart !"

People do not like to think or speak of this. Nineteenth century notions make light of sin, and explain away all terrible words of judgment and retribution. Yet the words stand there still. It has been said by a holy man that probably men will be altogether astonished at the awful punishment of sin. Men treat GOD as if He were a weak, good-natured creature, easily talked over, Who may be handled anyhow with impunity, Who never will keep His word, Who cannot be stern and inexorable. They explain away His threatenings ; they water down His plain warnings ; they transgress His laws, as they dare not break human laws. Oh, let us sinners "draw nigh" to hear His words, whatever they are ; all His words, for all are good and necessary for us ! Keeping away from Him is the one great sin.

Let us "draw nigh" to Him morning and evening in our private prayers ; on Sunday in His appointed place of meeting ; above all in the great Sacrament that He has instituted to bring Himself and the soul close together. "Drawing nigh" will help us to feel that we are sinners. "Drawing nigh" will make us pardoned sinners. Day after day passes, and year after year, and we are drawing near, and ever nearer, to the sight and presence of

GOD, to the great white throne, to the judgment, and our sentence; let us draw near now to the Friend of sinners, Who says, “Whosoever cometh to Me, I will in nowise cast out.”

Let us day by day go to the Cross. It is a narrow way; for each soul must go by himself. Magdalen crept up to His feet; Nicodemus stole to Him by night; let each one of us “draw nigh” to Him something in this way. The way has been well trodden :—

“For laden souls, by thousands meekly stealing,
Kind Shepherd, turn their weary steps to Thee.”

Fifteenth Sunday after Trinity.

THE EFFECTS OF SIN.

THE effects of sin, as regards ourselves, can be summed up in one word, Death. Sin strikes the soul dead. Before sin was known to man, GOD warned him that this was its effect. There was but one sin possible, and of that GOD said, that if man committed it, in that day he should die; the result would be instantaneous, the effect would be irremediable. Adam sinned, and death shrouded his soul instantly. But he did not then and there fall down dead. It was not of the death of the body that GOD spoke. Adam lived on, thought, felt; his soul was not annihilated, was not even reduced to torpidity; for his soul was immortal, unalterable, made in the image of the eternity of GOD. But for all that it was dead.

The analogy of the death of the body goes some way, but stops short, necessarily, in representing fully the death of the soul, because the body is not identical with the soul, but only like it, and vastly inferior to it. But even if the body is dead, it is not annihilated. It is often so little altered that we can scarce believe it is dead. It seems no more dead than it has appeared every day in sleep. The features are there, size, weight, and most of the characteristics of the living man. So it is with the sin-stricken soul. And because of this men make light of sin, and explain away its malignant

effects. Sin is done, and forgotten; and the man says, "What am I the worse for it?" So Esau jauntily went out, after he had pawned his birth-right for a meal; his pace was as fleet as before, his eye as true; he could kill his game as well as ever. What was he the worse because he had traded away his priesthood for a mess of pottage? Lamech killed a man, and at first thought that Cain's curse would fall upon him instantly. He waited, and it came not; and so he calls his wives, and makes light of murder.

So it has ever been, and is still. Job and David and many more have complained of the prosperity of the wicked, of the tardy judgment of GOD. In our narrow impatience we fancy that GOD must smite at once, as a pettish child returns blow for blow; and because He does not, some men are offended and indignant; some sneer and say there is no GOD at all; and more still congratulate themselves on their security, and go on still in their successful wickedness. "Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil."

Men's estimate of sin is made generally by its present and visible and temporal results. Sin that injures health or position, or that hurts others evidently and at once, this is understood to be evil, and this is denounced. But what has this to do with the matter? Sin affects those two great invisible realities, GOD and the soul. Sin cuts off the soul from GOD, and stops the stream of life, and hides the light of GOD'S face, and makes it impossible that those two, GOD and the soul, can be together; it makes mutual repulsion inevitable and constant. As the branch of a tree or the limb of a body that is cut off is at once and hopelessly dead, so is the soul that has sinned. Put away all

accidents, and we see it. GOD and the soul are the only eternities. We may strip away everything else, all creatures, down to our own bodies, one after another; all pass away, or we pass away from them; nothing stays; nothing is really ours. A few years, and everything that we see or know that is material has gone, and our naked soul stands alone; and face to face with it then, as now, as always, is GOD.

But sin has clung to us; nay, rather, it is part of ourselves; it has stamped itself into our souls, moulded them, changed them, debased them. We know not what death is to the soul, but we know what it is to the body; and the analogy doubtless holds, as far as it will go. A dead body! Those who loved the living one most dearly, bid it be put from them. It cannot move or love. We weep over it, but we put it away from us. And what read we of One who said, "If thou hadst known!" and then burst into a passion of weeping, and turned away, and left that which He wept over to destruction? What means this? It is a picture of GOD and the soul. GOD made it for Himself, to know and so to love Him, and to live in His love ever in utter blissfulness. But it sinned, and destroyed itself, in spite of Him; and life and death cannot dwell together; and so the dead soul, sin-slain, turns instinctively away from GOD into the outer darkness; and GOD turns from it the light of His eternal purity, and they two can never come together.

Yes, and there is more yet. "Eternal death"—I know not what it is, for GOD has not revealed it; but there are awful words and dreadful analogies and similes, and my soul quakes as I read. There is the tremendous justice of GOD. There is punishment for disobedience and rebellion. There is the outraged majesty of the Almighty to be vindicated. If man and his laws and rights demand and receive

observance, or exact punishment and retribution, shall not GOD and His law have their due? Is it essential to the stability of society that there be prisons and sentences, and shall GOD exact nothing of His disobedient creatures? Shall His justice never wield its sword?

My reason tells me the same that my Bible tells me, and I tremble as I hear the words, "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living GOD, for our GOD is a consuming fire." Yes, we talk of sin and of its effects, and by that we commonly mean its effects upon ourselves. But is that the end of the matter? Is there nothing else to be considered? Is there no one else that is affected by our sins, but only ourselves? Ah, the pitiful littleness of human self-sufficiency! What is sin but transgression against the law of GOD? Are we to think only of what sin does to us, and not at all of its relation to GOD?

One characteristic feature of modern irreligion is its insufferable impertinence. It treats Almighty GOD with the insolent familiarity of a low-bred upstart. There is much talk of the rights of man; there is nothing said of the rights of GOD, and of man's duties to Him. There was nothing of this in the old world. Then men feared GOD, and treated Him with reverence. Men felt sin and dreaded its punishment, and were ready to do and suffer to gain pardon. But now men dare each other to take greater and greater liberties with GOD, and mock and jeer, because He does not strike them dead! "If Thou be the Son of GOD, come down from the Cross; save Thyself; prophesy Thou CHRIST; who was it that smote Thee?"

Alas, for the revelation of the wrath of the Lamb! Alas, for those who shall look upon Him Whom they have pierced! Take liberties with the mighty ocean, and what will you get? Take liberties with



a volcano, a tiger, a steam-engine, and see what will come of it. And shall we, poor little creatures that we are, take liberties with the Infinite Creator, Who called us out of nothing to do His will, and be what He bade us; and shall we hope to come off free? Does an animal take liberties with us, set its will against ours; and what do we do? Does our child take impudent liberties and set us at defiance, and what do we do?

Be sure there is in modern irreligion, spite of its plausible self-vindication, an inner conscious hatred of GOD, a pitting of will against will, a rebellion, a defiance, a fight. This is an aspect of the sin of the last days which prophetic words depict to us; and do we not see it already, hear it, feel it? Once men hid their unbelief, and were more than half ashamed of it, but now they flaunt it before all and glory in it, and dare GOD to do His worst. GOD is not man. He has no passions of revenge, or such like; but GOD is LORD, and must be LORD of all. He would have all obey for love, but they who will not must still obey. All that opposes itself to His will must go down. Now for a little while there is liberty, but presently there will be judgment. And let us remember Who the Administrator of that judgment will be; it will be a Man! One who has been born, and lived, and suffered, and died in this world. One who knows by personal contact what sin is, what is temptation; the Son of Man, Who is also the Son of GOD. The justice of that tribunal will be acknowledged even by those whom it condemns. Not a tongue but shall then confess that GOD is holy, and that His way is right and His will goodness. Even they who go away condemned shall have already condemned themselves and acknowledged that GOD hath done all things well, and that they have lost themselves by their own desperate folly and wilfulness.

"Sin when it is finished bringeth forth death." Remember we, then, the end. The sin that tempts us is sweet in its beginning, but it is not yet finished. Men sin, and forget it; but the sin remains. They are dead while they live. Their souls are dead within them. Men follow leaders, like Sennacherib, who vaunt their prowess, who mock GOD, and dare Him to do His worst, and jeer at humble believers and servants of His. It is dark, and we cannot well see one another; but the morning comes, and with it light; and by that morning light the dreadful work of sin shall be seen; for "lo, they lie all dead corpses!"

Sixteenth Sunday after Trinity.

A DEAD MAN.

THE Gospel to-day tells us that, as our LORD entered Nain, "a dead man was carried out."

"A dead man"—a common sight. They say that a man dies somewhere every time the clock ticks. They say that the earth's whole surface, or a space equal to it, has been dug over more than once to bury the earth's dead men. Often in time of war spots of the earth's surface have been strewn as thickly with dead men as the ground is with leaves in autumn. The thing is so common that we think little more of seeing a dead man than of seeing a living man.

Yet what a mystery it is! There are the features, the form, the limbs, yet all useless, motionless, never again to be used. So like the living man, and yet so utterly different! We no longer use his name, but speak of his body as "it." How strange to lay it in the grave, and leave it there! That which was so nourished and cared for, to be left in the cold ground all night, and all the thousand thoughts for its welfare quite at an end! If he were young, what a pity that he should be cut off so in the midst of his days, with so small a share of life! If he were mature, what a pity that he should be taken away from life, just when he had learned how to live, just when the toil of education and

experience had made him useful! And if he were one near and dear to us, then there come other, keener, more bitter thoughts. What a blank in our world he has left! We cannot realise that he who was with us in life and health so short a time ago, that he with whom we have lived and travelled and eaten, whose features and ways we knew so well, is gone from us for ever! We rebel against it. It cannot—shall not be! We know not how to set about life without him.

And then there is something yet more hard to comprehend—our own death! That all this will happen to each one of us! That this body will be carried out stark and helpless, and left alone and uncared for in the cold grave, and that dearest ones will come away, who now tend us with tenderest solicitude, and that all our most personal things will pass into other hands, and that our little circle will know us, expect us, prepare for us, no more! It can be grasped by an effort; but it is not easy; and it slips away again, almost as soon as we have laid hold of it. For life and death are contradictions. Probably life is as hard to remember and realise by the dead as death is hard to realise now by us who live.

How, then, comes life to merge into death? It is hard to say. Putting aside accidents and violent attacks of disease, physiologists tell us that they know not why men should die as they do; that the majority are put to death, and die long before their time. Men's own ignorance and follies and mistakes, and the unwise and unnatural habits and customs of communities, these cut short the term of life, and import the seeds of death into living bodies, which grow till they are masterful and paramount, and then man dies.

But there is another aspect of all this. All this strange conflict between life and death goes on

within us, in another sphere besides that of the body. There is in each man a moral and spiritual life, and this is attacked by its own death ; and all too often death masters life, and the living man carries about his own spiritual corpse, dead for all good uses, but, like all dead things, malefic and deadly to all life that approaches. You say, a man is immoral ; you might say that the soul within him is dead, corrupting, and so infecting other souls that it touches. You shudder, perhaps, at the sight of a dead body—that is, a body without its spirit ; what shall we say of those men who are walking corpses, bodies without spirits ; men whose souls are dead within them, while they live ? You are afraid of seeing ghosts—that is, spirits without bodies, whose bodies are dead ; is it not a ghastlier thing to see these bodies without spirits ? There are spiritual and moral diseases, as well as those of the body. They are propagated in similar ways. They are contagious, catching ; they have their symptoms and periods, and the end of both, if they run their course unchecked, is death. People discuss and argue, and vex themselves with questions as to Hell and eternal punishment ; might we not know that if the death of the body is such a mystery, there may well be difficulties and insoluble mystery shrouding that most awful state of the sinful soul which GOD calls “the Second Death” and Death Eternal ?

And is there not something more practical, more important, that better deserves our attention, that demands our most serious care and thought, as we love ourselves and value our happiness ? It is this, that true religion is not feeling, but a condition. That sin, too, is a condition, and that it works death now, at the moment it is committed, and on and on for ever, unless it be healed and pardoned. “So long as a man can persuade himself that Hell is but an arbitrary punishment of GOD, he will hope

that GOD will let him off that awful punishment. He cannot believe that GOD will be so hard with him as that. No ; he thinks he will get off somehow. But it is a terrible thing for a man to find out that the direct result and end of his sin is death ; that it is not a punishment, but a natural and inevitable consequence, by the unalterable laws of GOD ; that he must not dream of being respited or pardoned ; the thing cannot be done ; it is contrary to the laws of GOD, and of the universe. It is as impossible as that fire should not burn, or that water should run uphill. Men cannot, and do not, escape the consequences of their own actions. There are no back-stairs by which we may be smuggled up to heaven. As we sow, we reap. Every man is his own poisoner, his own executioner, his own suicide. Hell begins in this life ; and death begins long before we die."

Oh, that men would take in this plain truth ! People go to hear this preacher and that, and if their feelings are roused and moved at the moment, they think they have done a good Sunday's work. But what has that to do with the matter ? The question of a man's religious condition is one of fact, not of feeling. His sins are there,-corroding out the life of his soul, or they are not. He has confessed and forsaken them, and been pardoned, or he has not. This is the one vital question : Has the sin-stricken soul come to the One Who alone can heal him, and heard His word of pardon, "I say unto thee, Arise" ? Or is it keeping away from Him above all things, adding sin to sin, wounding itself with blow after blow, aggravating the deadly disease, till it gallops to its inevitable consummation, Death ? Medicine and surgery are wonderful ; they can do great things, almost miracles, for the poor diseased body ; but there is one Physician, and one only, Who can heal the death-stricken soul ; and He is not only mighty, but almighty. What he did for men's

bodies when He was in the world was but a parable of what He does ever for the dying soul :—

“ Thy touch has still its ancient power,
No word from Thee can fruitless fall.”

First a cleansed heart ; then union with Him Who is life ; then daily growth in Him. This is the Christian’s calling ; not words and feelings. This is the antidote of death. This is life now, and for ever.

Seventeenth Sunday after Trinity.

THE SEA.

THERE are few persons who are not filled with admiration for the beauties of the Sea. The wonderful effects of light and shade; the dancing sparkle of the sun-lit wavelets; the soft sheen of the moon's reflection; the pleasant murmur of the tiny breakers upon the shore on a summer day; the white crests that fleck its surface when there is a fresh breeze; sunrise and sunset—these all delight us. We find the Sea always attractive, always fresh and new. We even watch its storm-tossed billows with delight; and where great ocean-rollers come on in majestic power, and hurl themselves with thundering resonance upon a rock-bound coast, we stand awed and fascinated, in speechless admiration. Poetic writers in all ages have dwelt upon the loveliness and the grandeur of the ocean. Greeks write of the

ἀναριθμον γελασμα θαλασσης;

and time would fail us if we tried to quote what our own authors have said. Thus:—

“The bridegroom Sea
Is toying with the shore, his wedded bride;
And in the fulness of his marriage joy
He decorates her tawny brow with shells,
Retires a pace to see how fair she looks
Then proud runs up to kiss her.”

Or again :—

“Calm or convulsed, in breeze, or gale, or storn.
Icing the pole, or in the torrid clime,
Dark-heaving, boundless, endless, and sublime,
The image of Eternity, the throne of the Invisible.”

And just once more :—

“Great Ocean ! strongest of Creation’s sons,
Unconquerable, unreposed, untired ;
That rolled the wild, profound, eternal bass,
In nature’s anthem, and made music such
As pleased the ear of GOD ! Original,
Unmarred, unfaded work of Deity,
And unburlesqued by mortal’s puny skill,
From age to age enduring and unchanged,
Majestical, inimitable, vast,
Loud uttering satire day and night, on each
Succeeding race, and little pompous work
Of man ! Unfallen, religious, holy Sea,
Thou bow’st thy glorious head to none, fear’st none,
Hear’st none, to none dost honour, but to GOD ;
Thy Maker only worthy to receive
‘Thy great obeisance.’”

But in the Bible we find none of this admiration for the Sea. When it is referred to, it is as an emblem of power only, or of danger, or of destruction, or of overwhelming afflictions, or of an angry and ruinous mob, or of the restless heart of the wicked man. And when the renewed earth is spoken of by St. John, he tells us that in that better world, “there shall be no more Sea.”

The Sea of Galilee is a lovely inland lake, of which modern travellers speak with words of boundless pleasure. The Mediterranean, specially the Sea of the Bible, is full of beauty to our eyes ; yet of the former nothing is said in the New Testament, except that JESUS stood with His back to it, preaching upon its shore, or that He crossed it, and was nearly wrecked, or that He trampled it down miracu-

lously and calmed its wild storm. And of the latter we hear scarcely anything, except of the shipwreck of St. Paul, when the master of the ship was beguiled, by the south wind blowing softly, to trust himself to its treacherous bosom.

The Church follows the New Testament regard for the Sea. She describes herself as the Ark of safety, floating upon the world's flood, destructive, pitiless, wasteful; and she prays that her children may "safely pass the waves of this troublesome world, and come to the land of everlasting life."

Let us try and see, then, some of the reasons that there are for this hostile regard of the Sea in Holy Scripture and the voice of the Church. First, then, the Sea compares unfavourably with the land, in respect of its utility to man. It is a waste, uncultivated and unproductive. Summer's sunshine does not render it fruitful. The soft rain, that makes the earth burst forth into life, is lost in the salt depths of the ocean. Man ploughs and cultivates the ground, and it yields him food, and all that he needs; but there is no harvest-tide, no vintage, no cattle-pasture, no forest, no water to drink, in the Sea, for man.

It may be said that the waters teem with animal and vegetable life; that the first apostles were fishermen, and that their craft is said by our LORD to be a type of the Church's work in saving souls. True; yet must we not distinguish between the quiet-growing fruit of the ground and the spoil of the Sea, wrested from it with difficulty and danger? How many lives does the fish-supply cost year by year! Sailors and fisher-folk are not enthusiastic about the Sea. They know its perils too well, its cruel exacting of tribute year by year, the widows and orphans whom it makes to weep and to suffer. And if CHRIST'S ministers are styled "fishers of men," it is because they draw men out of the world by the Church's net, or catch them with guile, not for death,

but for life, that they may raise them to a higher existence.

Then think of the avarice of the Sea. Beneath its sterile expanse lie beautiful cities and fair countries, submerged and gone. Think of the wealth, the works of art, the masterpieces of man's long labour, that lie lost and wasted in the Sea-depths ; the noble ships of all ages ; the bones of men, brave, goodly men, cut off in their prime, in spite of skill and endurance and prayers. The Sea is a vast cemetery, a sepulchre that smiles in the sunshine, and hides the awful carnage that never ends.

Is not this like the world and its ways, its waste, its greedy, insatiable ruin of all that is noble and beautiful in man, its seductions, its treacheries, its pitiless, sullen murder of souls, its beast-like lust of blood, from the Blood of the Son of GOD to the blood of the innocents of our great cities, that cries from their hideous slums to GOD on high ? We boast our modern civilisation and progress. One characteristic feature of it is the enormous growth of our towns. There are splendid buildings, wide streets, beautiful parks, vast wealth, novel methods of pleasure ; but, alas ! there is behind an awful growing mass of deeply degraded beings, hiding in the depths, which every now and then is revealed to us ; just as the Sea sometimes casts upon the shore one of its unnumbered dead.

Then think of the unstable, unreliable character of the Sea ; tossed by the winds, unable to resist ; bursting upon fair lands, battering great and beautiful ships to fragments, passing capriciously from placid calm to blind fury. A true picture of "the way of the world ;" to-day, "Alleluia ;" to-morrow, "Crucify Him." What is there so like a raging sea as a wild mob, howling, hurtling on furiously, without reason, without pity, only cruel and destructive ? In many places in Scripture the two are com-

pared—"The raging of the sea, and the madness of the people."

Compare all this with sanctified humanity. CHRIST is said to be "The Rock." The Church is a city firmly built upon the everlasting hills. And when St. John saw in his vision things that must be hereafter, twice he is shown a "Sea of glass and fire;" a mystical emblem of the changes found in the new heavens and earth. The Sea not unstable, but the firm standing-ground for "those who have gotten victory over the Beast;" not dead and cold, but glowing with celestial fire.

We begin to see the fitness of the Bible symbolism. Let us pass on to notice shortly some further similitudes and contrasts. The sailor spends a long time upon the Sea, but he never can make it his home. He embarks upon its uneasy surface, but it is only that he may reach lands on the other side. So GOD has sent us into the world, and our LORD, while He declares the world to be His enemy and ours, will not take us out of the world, but only warns us not to make our home here, but to look on to the haven where we would be. We are to be merchantmen, trafficking in many lands, laying up treasure, and in spite of storms, carrying all safe from ever-impending shipwreck to our port. The Church of CHRIST is like the Ark upon the waters of the dreadful flood. Those that are within are safe; and the way of that ship upon the pathless and hostile Sea is marvellous, as Solomon says the way of a ship always is.

But we must come nearer home. It is the individual soul that we have most to do with; and GOD'S Word is full of comfort and promise to those whom it describes as tried and afflicted in this present life, under the symbol of the dangers of the Sea. "Out of the deep have I cried unto Thee," says the Psalmist, speaking for all ages and for

every sorrowing heart. "All Thy waves and storms have gone over me." "Thou hast afflicted me with all Thy waves." And then there is the Divine response, "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee." There is the ever-fulfilled type of Israel, "Mine own will I bring again, as I did sometime, from the deep of the Sea." There is the touching story of Peter's daring, and Peter's failure, when he tried to do as his LORD was doing, and walk upon the water; and then, his faith failing at the sight of the heaving billows, he began to sink, and crying out, he found his Master's Hand supporting him. So do we start bravely, and presently fail weakly. So do we need, so do we hope for, the outstretched Hand, Wound-marked, to help and save us. And so there is a more wonderful meaning found in the old words, "Thy way is in the Sea, and Thy path in the great waters;" for when the poor soul is like the disciples' ship, covered with the waves and ready to sink, there comes One walking upon the waters saying, "Peace, be still." Yes; and there is a hidden force in the narrative, which we miss in our translation, but which helps to bear out the analogy that we are tracing. St. Mark tells us that our LORD "rebuked the Sea," and said, "Be still." The word that He used is the same as that with which He silenced and drove out an evil spirit from a man, "Be thou muzzled, and come out."

There seems, then, a resemblance traced by our LORD Himself between the raging of the storm-driven Sea and the overmastering power of the spirits of evil. "The wicked," whether wicked spirits or wicked men, "are like the troubled Sea, when it cannot rest." They "foam out their own shame." The temptations of the world, the flesh, and the devil come upon us; we seem to be alone, like the disciples in their boat; or if our LORD be

with us, He appears to be asleep, and not to care that we perish; but if we call, He will hear and answer and deliver us, though it may not be as soon as we wish or in the way that we expect. For His peace sometimes does not come till the last, when we are "delivered from the miseries of this sinful world," where "the wicked cease from troubling and the weary are at rest":—

"Safe home, safe home in port :
 Rent cordage, shattered deck,
Torn sails, provisions short,
 And only not a wreck."

"JESUS, Deliverer,
 Come Thou to me :
Soothe Thou my voyaging
 Over life's sea.
Thou, when the storm of death
 Roars, sweeping by,
Whisper, Thou Truth of Truth,
 'Peace ! It is I.'"

Eighteenth Sunday after Trinity.

THE SOUL'S LONGING FOR LIFE.

NO less than nine times in the "Psalm of the Saints" do these words occur, "Quicken Thou me." This is the cry of the spiritual man in the midst of the materialism of the world. "Quicken Thou me," cries the soul oppressed, drawn down, hampered by the flesh; "Quicken Thou me," give me life, sustain my life, strengthen my life. This is the unceasing agonising prayer of the Christian, whose conversation is in heaven, but who feels within and without the powers of death and hell fighting, sapping, paralysing.

All through the Psalms, in the New Testament, in the Old Testament, in the words of GOD'S servants of every age, of every country, of every degree of spiritual knowledge and enlightenment, this cry goes up, and ever has gone up, and will go up, till death shall be swallowed up in the final victory of life.

All through the universe, wherever we can see and examine it, there is seen the power of death. Everywhere death reigns, and its power is submitted to without resistance, without complaint, for there is no consciousness. Only in man there is the sense of the misery, the degradation, the waste, of death; the protest against it, the cry for deliverance from it, the hope that there may be an end to it, a death for death, a revelation of life, resurrection, everlasting life.

Spring and summer are beautiful, but there is the dull foreboding of autumn and winter. We gaze with delight upon children, gay, joyous, careless; presently we look again, and in their place are toiling, sorrowing men and women. Childhood and youth are joyous and happy, but they lead on inevitably, and all too soon, to age, decrepitude, and death. Flowers bloom in high summer in prodigal luxuriance, but how fragile they are, how short-lived! Yesterday's wealth of colour and fragrance, with which we decked our rooms, lies to-day dabbled, faded, and foul, and we hasten to fling them away. The great, the noble, the lovely, do but form a procession whose destination is the churchyard. History, magnificent buildings, arts, masterpieces, the triumphs of inventions, of skill, of patience, of courage, all, all end at last in "the cold *Hic jacets* of the tomb."

Stand in the bright sunshine upon some seaside cliff. The eye revels in beauty; every sense is delighted, till we cry, "The world is lovely; life is good; everything is rejoicing in life and happiness." But is it so? The very cliff you stand upon is but a fragment, a ruin. It has been scarped away from some great hill, and as you stand it is crumbling down beneath your feet. It is full of dead bones and half-perished remains of creatures that once lived and sported in the sunshine. The grass that clothes its top is scorching up, and will soon be dry as dust. The sea-birds, that soar so gracefully, are preying upon the fish; the fish are devouring one another. The very insects, that fill the air, and make music for you as they flit by, slay and are slain, and some of them live at most but a day. Nature is beautiful outwardly, but within it is a charnel-house of destruction and decay.

Look up at the silver moon, smiling calmly amidst the clouds, its bright rays glittering upon the water, its beauty making the balmy summer night more fit

for enjoyment than for sleep. Yes; but the moon is a dead world. Once, perhaps, like our own, the abode of life; now deserted, still, worn out, having served its turn, flung aside, done with, dead.

So it is everywhere in creation. So it will be, they say, with this world of ours. So even with the sun itself. So with all the host of heaven. All, all goes slowly, surely, on to destruction; motionless, lifeless rest; coldness, decay, death. So let it be. The laws of matter work on, and work to their ultimate and inevitable consummation; but matter has no soul, no hope, no regret, no feeling at all. The wreck of worlds is less touching than the wailing of an infant in pain. The end of all created things is nothing compared with the complaint of a man, "My soul cleaveth to the dust."

Yes, man stands alone in the universe. He alone will not acquiesce in the universal law of destruction and death. His soul within him is dragged down, like everything else, but it alone resists, and refuses to submit quietly. Life in man is conscious of itself, and looks upward, while the tide of everything around it sweeps downward. When death snatches away dear ones, man refuses to believe that they have come to an end, and that he will not meet them again. And as he himself lies down to die, he cries to the LORD of life, "Quicken Thou me." "I believe the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen."

All through life man's thought is the same. Why does the educated man go on learning ever all through life? If death ends all, let us eat and drink, and crown ourselves with rosebuds before they be withered. But noble souls cannot do this. There is within them an uncontrollable instinct of progress. To the last they gather and lay up store, and cannot be persuaded by appearances to believe that their labour will be lost, their pains wasted,

their treasure useless. Nowhere in animate creation do we find an instinct without its fulfilment, and man has an instinct of immortality :—

“Thou wilt not leave us in the dust :
 Thou madest man, he knows not why ;
 He thinks he was not made to die ;
 And Thou hast made him : Thou art just.”

So the spiritual man’s complaint is, “My soul cleaveth to the dust ;” and his unceasing prayer to his GOD, “Quicken Thou me.” His never-ceasing aspiration is for life; his daily labour is against the incoming of spiritual death. Lusts flesh-born clamour for indulgence, but he knows that the end of these things is death, and he fights against them for life, and cries upward to One higher, mightier, “Quicken Thou me.” Habits, customs, sins, earth-born, caught like infectious diseases bred from degraded and foul men, lower over the man, creep upon him, smother him in their lethal folds; appalled, ready to perish, he lifts up his voice and groans, “Quicken Thou me :”—

“Wearied, I loathe myself, I loathe my sinning,
 My stains, my festering sores, my misery.
 Thou the Beginning ; Thou at my beginning
 Didst see me, and didst foresee
 Me miserable, me sinful, ruined me ;
 I plead Thyself with Thee.”

Intellects, developed out of all proportion, occupied only with one idea, deny the very existence of spirit ; with shrewd induction, with pitiless logic, with cold, heartless facts and theories, they tell the man that he is but an animal, an automaton, a fragment of nature, as helpless as a stone, without will, without soul, soon to be annihilated. But his living soul within him gives the lie to the argument that he cannot answer. He can do nothing else, but he betakes him instinctively to prayer—“Mine enemies

speak evil of me; when shall he die, and his name perish? My soul cleaveth to the dust; quicken Thou me, according to Thy Word."

"According to Thy Word,"—the materialist has but one idea, "According to law." The spiritual man sees himself made in the image of GOD, with will, with freedom, with affections, able to rule the brute forces of nature, and therefore he says, "According to Thy Word." He has been taught that, "Like as a father pitith his children, so is the LORD merciful." He too believes in law, but he sees behind it the Lawgiver. He allows that nature is a revelation of GOD, but he knows that, as a man's works show what he is, so and much more his words tell his thoughts, his will, his affections; and JESUS CHRIST is the revelation of GOD, "the Word of GOD," telling us GOD'S will, showing us GOD'S love, teaching us GOD'S purposes, as no blind laws can tell us, as no dead matter can paint them to us, as no speechless creation, however vast, however beautiful, can possibly reveal them. As the cold marble bust is inferior to the living, breathing, thinking, loving man, so are man's theories of morality, and the materialist's fancies respecting natural religion, cold and impotent, compared with the living power of the human life of JESUS CHRIST.

The spiritual man therefore prays, "Quicken Thou me, according to Thy Word," according to the Word of GOD, CHRIST JESUS, the perfect Man, GOD manifest in human flesh. By Him he knows what to desire, how to live. In Him he sees the possibilities of human nature. Comparing himself with Him, he sees his own failings, he knows what he wants, what he must aim at and pray for, what he may become. CHRIST is life; by being united to Him, man's soul, cleaving to the dust, is quickened; he draws down life into it from Him.

Everywhere man looks out of himself for spiritual

help; gradually light has dawned upon his soul from above. GOD has been known more and more, just as the increasing daylight discovers what is round us. In the night there are vague, vast shadowy masses, that assume weird forms and seem to threaten us, for we cannot judge of size, or distance, or solidity. Then the faint dawn puts many things into their places, and gives hope of better things to come. Gradually light increases, and the terrors of night flee away. Colour appears; our prospect widens, till, when the sun bursts forth, beauty and order are seen everywhere, and the world as it is, and always was, is before our eyes. So has it been with man's knowledge of GOD. At first brute ignorance; then vague terror; now wonder, adoration, joy, love, trust.

And still we look on. The perfect day has not yet come. We still see through a glass darkly; but experience creates hope. We look by faith for more light; light without shadow, day without eventide; progress, not retrogression; light overpowering darkness, life conquering death; not man going down to destruction with created things, but man with GOD going onward and upward, when worlds and their laws have done their work and have passed away.

Nineteenth Sunday after Trinity.

GOD TO US—WHAT WE ARE TO HIM.

THE world around us is made known to us only through the medium of our senses. We see, hear, smell, touch, taste, and so our mind forms certain conclusions and opinions ; and if in any man these senses are disorganised, his knowledge of the things outside himself is at once affected. The blind man does not know the world as it actually is ; his impressions and ideas must be different from ours who see, and they must be more or less erroneous, or at the least imperfect. So, too, if the sense be not altogether wanting, but only weak or morbid in its action, the man still is affected in his knowledge of the objects of that sense ; the world is the same, but to him it is different from what it is to other men ; as, for instance, in the case of colour-blindness, or short sight, or weak sight.

There is every reason to believe that there are many objects, things, and persons about us which we cannot recognise only because our senses are too limited to take notice of them. Nor is this all. The world and men and circumstances may be always the same, and yet different men, or even the same men under different circumstances, will find these things quite different to them. The astronomer, with his scientific knowledge, looks at the moon and the stars with one idea, and the dull clown regards them with another, and the fanciful child with a third. The robust, healthy

man rejoices in the sun and wind and breaking sea, while the poor disease-stricken invalid seeks only shelter and quiet and repose. When we are well, we sit down to our food with appetite; what we eat pleases us, and does us good; but if we are sick, we loathe the very sight of food, and what we eat causes pain and discomfort, and is rather poison to us than strength and nourishment. The same man, when he has heard some good news or received an accession of fortune, takes a very different view of life, and of men and things, from that which he does at another time, when he has sustained a loss, or is worried and anxious and desponding. With a pleasant companion and a light heart everything looks bright; but with tiresome people, or a secret grief, or a gnawing apprehension, the fairest prospect fails to please and luxury and wealth lose all their value. The cheerful, good-natured man carries an atmosphere about with him; he forces people to be to him what he is to them; while the cynical, the suspicious, the ill-natured, actually stir up the same feeling in the people with whom they have to do. Men lament their misfortunes, and complain against the providence of GOD, when indeed they are but reaping the harvest which they have themselves sown.

So dependent are we upon our senses for our impressions of the world around us, that there are subtle theories maintained by some thinkers by which they declare that material things do not really exist at all, but that we live, as it were, in a dream, tricked by the visions of the untrustworthy senses, which constantly deceive us, and make us believe that we are surrounded by a world that exists only in our imagination. We know that mad people thus live in unreality and fancy, and some would have us believe that we are all more or less mad and deluded.

But be this as it may, this is evidently certain, the world is to us a great deal what we are to it. There is a world without, and a world within us, and our ultimate impression is the result of the action of these two upon each other.

If this is evidently the case with regard to all that relates to man and the things of this present life, might we not expect that the same law would hold good with respect to GOD and the things that concern Him and the soul? GOD and His law and will and revelation are the same and invariable, but different men, and the same man under different circumstances, view them in very different ways. So it is that strange theories about religion arise. So it is that all men can find arguments for their pet theories in the Bible. And GOD, Who has made each one of us a free and responsible agent, respects His own ordinance, and will not compel our faith and obedience. Nay, He is of necessity to us what we are to Him. "With the holy Thou shalt be holy, and with the perfect man Thou shalt be perfect; with the clean Thou shalt be clean, and with the foward Thou shalt learn frowardness." So it was that Michaiah answered Ahab according to his own wishes, "Go up, and prosper," when he was going to his death. So it was that the old prophet of Samaria easily persuaded the prophet from Judah to stay and eat bread with him, speaking lies in the name of the LORD.

Was it not so with GOD when He was in the world in human flesh? To those who came to Him to argue He gave puzzling questions, and they went away baffled, caught in the net they had laid. Thus He proposed the question of the baptism of John, that of the son of David being also his LORD, and His statement as to building the Temple in three days. He met subtlety with subtlety. So when the father of the dying child came to Him with the doubt-

ing, ungracious words, "If thou canst do anything," His reply was in the same strain, "If thou canst believe." Contrast this with His loving gentleness to repentant sinners, the Magdalen, the thief on the Cross. Those whose hearts were ready saw and loved Him; others could see nothing to be desired in Him, and some hated Him, and were not content till they had murdered Him. His words fell into some hearts that were like the good and prepared ground; it took root at once and flourished; while the same gracious message lay and rotted within others, or was snatched away, or was smothered, and was ineffectual, though it was really omnipotent.

So, then, now we can turn back to those words which we have read in the first Lesson this morning, "Thus saith the LORD; Every man of the house of Israel that setteth up his idols in his heart, and putteth the stumbling-block of his iniquity before his face, and cometh to the prophet, I the LORD will answer him that cometh according to the multitude of his idols;" and we can see what they mean. These men came to GOD by His prophet, but kept their idols in their hearts, and GOD said He would answer them according to the multitude of their idols. It could not be otherwise; they had perverted their senses, and God seemed to them otherwise than He was; His voice, His face, His hand, were all altered to them by their degradation; they were poisoned and weakened, and all their powers were contorted. GOD stood before them in all His glory and love and goodness, but, like a broken, ill-made glass, their souls received an impression of a hideous, fierce, bloodthirsty, capricious idol. His voice called to repentance and offered boundless mercy, but their ears heard not, or heard amiss, or mistook the cunning voices of tempters and evil ones for the voice of GOD. His dispensations of

providence were all ordered for their good, but to them all seemed hard, cruel, unjust. And all this not because GOD had changed to them, but because they had changed to Him ; not because He had made them incapable of seeing and knowing and believing, but because they had perverted and corrupted and degraded themselves by the voluntary choice of evil instead of good, and of idols which embodied those evil things which they loved, instead of GOD, the one Good.

What was then is still. GOD is true and one and loving ; GOD would have all men to be saved ; GOD is not the author of confusion and schism and doubt, but of order and law and rule ; but men's sins and passions and mental licentiousness have perverted all, and led them away to every sin and every delusion. Idolatry is as prevalent to-day as it was in the days of Ezekiel. GOD showed him the Temple polluted with gods painted upon the walls and raised up in the courts ; and now GOD'S temple is in the hearts of baptized Christians, and there idols are set up, and adored and worshipped ; and when these men come to GOD, He answers them according to the multitude of their idols. One man is secretly sensual and impure in life and thought ; another gives his soul to making money ; another brings everything to the test of his own mind, and rejects what is too great for it to take in its puny grasp. Of how many women Shakespeare's words are true, "Their soul is in their clothes" ! We are all endowed with spiritual faculties, with powers to know and love GOD ; but these powers may be in abeyance, uncultivated, overlaid by gross habits, till we have lost all idea of GOD, all desire for Him, all ability to raise our souls towards Him ; just as the ignorant man stares helplessly at a book in a foreign language, or a poor dog looks up into his master's face, and cannot answer

a word to all he says, or even put his own poor thoughts into language.

What wonder, then, that these men fall into error, and do not know GOD, and have doubts, and delusions, and strange opinions and theories? We all know how the body may be injured by the indulgences of sensuality; we see how the mind may break down if wrongly worked upon; so may the soul be ruined and made unfit for its high vocation if its powers are misused and misdirected, till it becomes actually impossible for the man to know and love GOD. In these days especially it is needful to remind men of this, that seems so little known, and less thought of, that the faculties of the mind are to be used and governed in the same way as those of the body. We have all natural instincts and appetites and passions, but we know that these must be used with moderation, restrained, limited; but many men who understand and practise this with regard to the body and its functions and desires act otherwise with the powers of the mind. To these they give unbridled license; these they indulge without limit, without law or rule. They are, in fact, mental sensualists and debauchees, and so they lose faith and love, and the knowledge of GOD and of truth, and embrace hideous errors, and debase themselves to infidelity and mere animal, temporal secularism, believing that they shall die like the beasts, and live no more. A telescope will not reveal the distant star unless it is kept in perfect order. Even an ordinary machine will not do its work if roughly handled, or left to go rusty, or injured by being used for some purpose for which it is not fit; so men debase themselves till they are too low, too animal, to see GOD; so others use all their faculties for this world's business or pleasures, so that they become perverted and bent out of shape, and are utterly incapable of anything spiritual. The soul is

a far more delicate machine than a telescope or an engine, and may soon get out of order, and be spoiled, and utterly ruined.

Surely the mental faculties should be restrained and regulated as well as those of the body. Surely GOD has given laws of thought as well as laws of life. Surely we must know that the mind's powers, as well as those of the body, are limited and circumscribed, and that there are bounds beyond which we may not go. Surely, as there are deeds which we are well content never to have done, so there are fields of speculation which we may be well content never to have trodden. There are tempter-voices offering us the knowledge of good and evil; there are sneers that we are slaves and cowards, children, dotards, and antiquated bigots; just as those who indulge in sensuality, or live for the world and for themselves, sneer at those who live by another and higher rule.

But we care not, for we know that we have chosen that good part which shall not be taken away from us. We have learned that GOD is very great, and that we are very little; that He is the infinite Creator, and that we are weak and finite creatures; and, better still, we have learned that GOD is our dear Father, and that we are His children and heirs. We see His love in the Cross. We know His hatred of sin, His aids and helps. To Him we come, purging our hearts of all idols by the thorough and ever-repeated cleansing of repentance and confession of sin, knowing that it is the pure in heart only who shall see GOD. Of Him we ask light and love, and purity and faith. In Him we trust, in the midst of infirmity and sorrow and doubt. His Spirit bears witness to our spirit. We receive grace for grace, and therefore we leave in His hands the unanswered riddles and tangled puzzles of life now, and the great unknown future, and we know that all will be well.

Twentieth Sunday after Trinity.

THE COLLECT FOR THE SUNDAY.

"THE days are evil," and therefore we pray in the Collect to-day that we may be "kept from all things that may hurt us;" just as our LORD taught us to pray daily, "Deliver us from evil;" evil without and within, evil spirits and evil men, evil that is evident and confessed, and evil that is disguised and misnamed good. In all ages sober and earnest men have groaned under the evil of the times they lived in. Horace tells us that it is sign of old age to praise bygone times and to deprecate the present. Youth may for a few years rejoice in the present, and speak well of life as it finds it; but evil days come sooner or later, and men change their tone from the major to the minor key, as experience ripens them or sours them.

But Christianity ripens men, and does not sour them. Of it it is true, "Honourable age is not that which standeth in length of time, nor that is measured by number of years, but wisdom is the grey hair unto men, and an unspotted life is old age. The righteous man, being made perfect in a short time, hath fulfilled a long time."

Every one desires to be kept from that which will hurt them, and yet men run headlong upon hurtful things; just as children, through ignorance, would eat poison-berries because they are pretty-looking, and cry and fret because they may not do what would bring them injury or death.

The fact is, wisdom is needed to see what is really hurtful, and to avoid it. "There is no fool so great as an old fool." If years and experience do not give men wisdom, where shall we look for it? Therefore, the godly man can honestly say, "I am wiser than the aged, because I keep GOD'S commandments." A surgical operation is hurtful, and yet the wise man seeks it, if he knows that the result will give him health and prolong life. It is hurtful to deny oneself pleasures and indulgences and to persevere in duty, yet the wise man does so, and therefore he prays without reserve that GOD will "keep him from all things that may hurt him," leaving it absolutely to GOD to say what is and what is not hurtful. His wisdom teaches him to rely upon the Infinite Wisdom, and to entrust himself and all his ways to the good providence of his Heavenly Father.

"Thy will be done; deliver us from evil;" we use these words daily, and sometimes perhaps lightly, but they are gravest words, words fit for highest and most perfected saints, living supernatural lives in the midst of an evil world. So the godly wealthy man takes his wealth in his hand and goes upon his knees, and says, "Deliver us from evil; keep me from all things that may hurt me;" and so saying, he asks GOD to take away from him his wealth, if to him it is an evil, if it is hurting him. So with health and good name, dear ones of our home, and all else that makes this life sweet. The wise man, the Christian man, yields all to the wise disposal of the Eternal Wisdom, and says, "O almighty and most merciful GOD, of Thy bountiful goodness keep us, we beseech Thee, from all things that may hurt us; those things which for our blindness we cannot ask, vouchsafe to give us."

Can we really say this? Can we pray to-day as the Church bids us pray? We may test our Christian position by this, and see how we stand, how far we

have learned the lesson of the Gospel, how far we have attained in the imitation of CHRIST, Whose life-motto was, "Not My will, but Thine be done."

"What!" you say, "must I offer myself to be dealt with absolutely as GOD wills? Must I ask Him to give me poverty and pain, and sickness and sorrows, and all that is most painful and repugnant to human nature, if it will do me good, if GOD'S wisdom chooses it for me; to take away what I value most, what is best and dearest, and, as it seems, most indispensable to my happiness and well-being? Must I say—

'Thy way, not mine, O LORD,
However dark it be;
Lead me by Thine own Hand,
Choose out the path for me.
Take Thou my cup, and it
With joy or sorrow fill,
As best to Thee may seem.
Choose Thou my good and ill.
Choose Thou for me my friends,
My sickness, or my health.
Choose Thou my cares for me,
My poverty or wealth'?"

Yes, this is indeed what the Collect to-day says for us. This is what we say daily in the LORD'S Prayer. Such is the height of our Christian calling, not for saints, but for all and each.

Where men realise this, where they give themselves up in perfect trust to GOD'S disposal, having no will but His, there the peace of GOD reigns in their hearts, and they enjoy heaven already. Nothing surprises them, nothing distresses them, nothing shakes their confidence. They are passive in the Hands of GOD, and all is well; and nothing can by any means hurt them. May we learn more and more this secret of happiness; then the days may be evil, but there will be good times for us:—

"O LORD, how happy should we be
If we could cast our care on Thee ;
If we from self could rest,
And feel at heart that One above,
In perfect wisdom, perfect love,
Is working for the best !
O could we but relinquish all
Our earthly props, and simply fall
On Thine almighty Arms !"

But this is not all, high and wonderful as it is. There is yet another part of Christian life and duty of which the Collect reminds us. We are also to be "ready both in body and soul to accomplish those things that GOD would have done." Hitherto we have spoken only of patient, passive submission to GOD'S will and providence; this tells us that there must also be active work, that the Christian life may be truly lived. We must be "ready both in body and soul." There is much work to be done, work for GOD and man and ourselves, work within and without; not mere endurance of painful dispensations, but fulfilment of vocation, the culture of the soul's powers, that it may be made what GOD intends it to be, and the performance of relative duty, the regard for the welfare of others.

Here, as ever, our LORD'S example is our pattern and guide. His life was one long faultless performance of duty, one constant working of that which He had to do. And all Christian lives are the imitation of Him, with more or less success. He was always "ready both in body and soul." He always "accomplished that which He had to do." With much pain and self-denial this was done, with weary body and sorrowful soul. He plodded on through life, till He slowly mounted the hill of Calvary, and having done and endured all, He cried, "It is finished," and rested from His labours in death.

Like Him were His saints and martyrs. Like Him

must we be "ready in body and soul." The body rebels—sloth, indulgence, weariness, raise obstacles, and make objections to accomplishing what GOD would have done. The soul rebels—it too is disinclined, preoccupied, led aside by many attractions and affections. But both body and soul must be schooled and trained, till they are ready to accomplish what GOD would have done.

But there is one word we have omitted—"cheerfully." As we have seen that submission must be glad and willing, so must work be cheerful, if it is to be well done and accepted. Grudging, slavish labour is never satisfactory. Those who have not given themselves to GOD shrink from His service with fear and abhorrence. They seem to be bidding adieu to all happiness, when they think of taking up the Cross. But in reality the first characteristic of the true servant of GOD is cheerfulness. Not merely peace, but joy. "In His presence is fulness of joy." They do GOD'S work and will "as it is in heaven," and there all is done gladly and cheerfully.

Here, then, is the antidote for "evil days." Here is the remedy for heartache. Here is CHRIST'S own rule of human life. Let us pray this week, as the Church teaches us, every day, that this secret of a happy life may be ours; that we may walk, not as fools, but as wise; so shall we be not only called, but chosen; so shall we not only sit down at the marriage-feast, but be clothed with the wedding-garment and enter into the joy of our LORD.

Twenty-first Sunday after Trinity.

THE MARTYR SPIRIT.

IN the chapter preceding to-day's Lesson the account is given of Daniel's interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar's dream. The king dreamed of a great image, and Daniel told him that he, the king, was the golden head which he saw upon it. Possibly this may have led Nebuchadnezzar to the construction of this enormous golden image, eighty-five feet high. What the image was we are not told. We know that primitive kings constructed huge statues of themselves, and we know that they received divine honours; so that it is supposed by many that Nebuchadnezzar caused a figure of himself to be made, and to be worshipped. But it is probable, for several reasons, that this is not the exact account of the matter. The dimensions given are not at all those of the human figure. It is more likely that the image was a gilded pillar, perhaps having the king's head on the top, in remembrance of Daniel's words, "Thou art the head of gold." Pillars of this kind were common objects of worship among all nations of the old world, and learned men tell us what they meant. They were symbols of the power of nature, the author and continual reproducer of life.

This idea was at the root of all primitive idolatry. Having lost the true key to the mystery of creation, man groped about to find a meaning for the wonder-

ful system in which he found himself. Everywhere he saw life reproducing itself; and he sought the wondrous hidden source of this mysterious power. He noticed that the Sun was the great moving-power, and he worshipped the Sun as GOD, or GOD'S vicegerent or representative. Then he imagined that the different parts of nature had their spiritual powers working unseen within them, and so man invented deities of places and of the elements. Sometimes the wonderful instincts and properties and powers of animals occupied man's thoughts, till he imagined that in them divine power operated; and so animal-worship arose. The evidence of all this is before us, in the remains of all ancient idolatries, in every part of the world.

But there is also another reason for supposing that Nebuchadnezzar's image was a representation of the powers of nature, from the hymn sung by the three martyrs in the fire. What is the spirit and keynote of that hymn "Benedicite"? It is a detailed relation of the powers and creatures of nature, and a calling upon each in turn to praise and worship GOD. See the fitness of this. The king set up an image of nature's reproductive power, and commanded all to worship it. But these men said, "Nature is not GOD, but GOD'S creature. We see the wonderful animals, the powerful elements; we see the beast and herb reproducing themselves; we acknowledge the rule of angels; we admire the courses of the stars, the order of the sun and moon, and the seasons, and day and night, which they produce. We know how mysterious animal life is; we have noticed the rain and the wind, the ice and the snow, lightnings and clouds, and all else in this strange world; but we have been taught in old times by GOD Himself that all these things were made by Him, and that they still do His will. Their beauty, their order, show forth His praise;

we will not worship them, but we call upon them to join with us in worshipping the one eternal GOD, the Creator of all, who is even now vindicating His sovereignty by suspending and overruling the ordinary laws of nature, and miraculously giving us life and perfect security and repose, in the midst of devouring fire."

Read thus, the hymn "Benedicite" has perfect fitness, and a very beautiful and lofty meaning. The Hebrews alone had the knowledge of the true GOD and the history of creation. They had indeed fallen themselves into idolatry, but now that the threatened punishment had come upon them, their Temple destroyed, their divinely ordered worship taken from them, their national independence gone, their magnificent promises forfeited, and they themselves made slaves to a people utterly given up to idols, now bitter experience once for all converted them from idolatry, and led them back to the old paths; and they were ready to die rather than give the incommunicable honour of GOD to king or image or creature.

Perhaps we have thought that such Lessons as that which is read this morning out of date. A few generations ago men might have said that such chapters of the Bible had lost their value, or at least nearly all their application to us and our day. But old errors revive; the old enemies of the truth "get them a new sword" and return to the battle. The Beast, that seemed to have received a deadly wound, is healed, and men marvel after it, as St. John tells us in Revelation. The drift of modern thought is towards the negative creed, "There is no GOD." The golden image of nature is being slowly, laboriously, at great cost, set up, and all men are bidden to fall down and worship it. It is Nebuchadnezzar's image over again—nature without GOD—nature self-existent, self-sufficient—nature's

laws, and with them man's laws—these instead of GOD and His revelation of truth. The despotism of kings is gone; but there are other despotisms besides that of kings, and they are very tyrannous.

Such a despotism is fashion, whether it insists upon a foolish style of dress or a particular line of thought; and the latter, very often, has no more sound reason at its foundation than the former. A statement, or a theory, or a system does not become true because it is vehemently maintained by a popular teacher, or because a great many people follow one another blindly in accepting it. People are not burnt in these days because they will not follow with the multitude. It is not the fashion. But it is very hard to stand alone against everybody, or even against a majority. We are not commanded to bow down to a golden image now-a-days on pain of death; but that which the New Testament calls "the World" is still a real enemy, and one very hard to stand against.

The actual city of Babylon has been a shapeless ruin these many years, and yet we read of Babylon in Revelation as the enemy of godly souls even to the very last days. The fact is Babylon still reigns and rules. The spirit that prevailed there still tyrannises, still commands men to apostatise from GOD; and nothing but the martyr's spirit of these three Hebrew heroes will keep men from yielding. The boy at school is tempted to do what he knows is wrong, and he does it, unless he has this martyr's spirit. All through a man's life this temptation is at his side—nay, in his heart. Conscience says "No," but he looks out upon the world, as men looked out upon the plain of Dura that bright, sunny morning, with hosts of men bowing with one accord to the image, and it is hard not to do as others do, especially when the opposite course involves such unpleasant consequences.

"I write unto you, young men," said St. John, "because ye are strong, and the word of GOD abideth in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one." How to be strong St. Paul tells us in the Epistle this morning. It is the strong who overcome, the brave, those with whom the Word, JESUS CHRIST, abides, as He did with these three in the furnace. Young men sin for the most part because they are cowards, because they cannot stand being laughed at, because they are afraid of being different from others, because they are afraid to do what is right when it is unpleasant, and involves discomfort or exertion or self-sacrifice. It is weakness of character that is the cause of half men's sins. Men pretend that godly people are mean-spirited and cowards. They say it to try and divert the true charge from themselves. They know that they themselves are what they are because they are cowards, afraid of other people, afraid of the manly pain of self-denial, afraid to say "No" to the demands of those three great tyrants, the World, the Flesh, and the Devil.

Yes, the godly man is always a brave man. The sinful man is always a coward. The godly man may not be called to give up his life with the martyrs, but he is always called to give up something for GOD's sake, for conscience' sake, to suffer something, rather than do wrong. But his suffering brings his LORD to his side now, and will bring him to his LORD'S side hereafter.

Twenty-second Sunday after Trinity.

RESTING WITHIN THE HANDS OF GOD.

IT was said by man's Maker in the beginning, "It is not good for man to be alone." There was, and there is, a wider and a deeper meaning in the words than that which indicates that woman should be man's true helpmeet. There is much loneliness besides that which human companionship can remedy. The heart may, and does sometimes,

"Feel more utterly alone
For friends officious pressing round."

"Miserable comforters are ye all!" cries many a desolate soul, even in the midst of life's best, even when friends are doing all they can. There is a place in the heart that no human consolation can fill. There are deeps that answer not to the deeps of the warmest sympathy, of the tenderest love.

The widespread misery of the world, the most intolerable agony of the poor wandered spirit, is the want of the sense of the presence and comfort of GOD:—

"A distant GOD
Is what I cannot bear."

Some know what they want, and cry out in their desolation. The Psalms are full of such cries, of which the Son of Man availed Himself in His moment of utmost need, wailing out, "My GOD, My GOD! why hast Thou forsaken Me?"

But many are lonely, they know not why. They are stricken with spiritual disease that they cannot understand. Their lower self flees from GOD, and screams, "What have I to do with Thee?" while their higher nature is athirst for GOD, and is dying within them, and by its death-throes is wrecking and destroying the feebler material frame:—

"Poor blind souls
That writhe toward heaven along the devil's trail !
Who knows, I thought, but He may stretch His hand
And pick them up ? 'Tis written in the Book,
He heareth the young ravens when they cry ;
And yet they cry for carrion."

There can be no greater contrast than that which is presented on the one hand by the writings of cynics and pessimists, of materialists and worn-out voluptuaries, of secularists and heathen philosophers, and on the other hand by the writers of the Psalms. The first sneer, drag forth horrors, and rejoice to paint them black, carp and complain, preach despair, deny GOD, or blaspheme Him. The Psalmists see the evil as plainly as the others, but they never lose their trust in GOD, and they look up to Him alone for a remedy. And when they give expression to the sorrows of their own hearts, their most agonising cries are alternated with words of hope. So our LORD, in His desolation upon the Cross, used words from the Psalms, as we have seen, but presently from the same Book He borrowed words of confidence, and died saying, "Father, into Thy Hands I commend My Spirit." So David in the 31st Psalm, in the midst of heartrending utterances, wrung from him by cruel sufferings, can yet say, "My times are in Thy Hand," and end the psalm with praise and thanksgiving, calling upon others in like need to do as he has done, and promising them help and comfort at last: "Be of good courage, and He

shall strengthen your heart, all ye that hope in the LORD."

Let us try for a few moments to enter into the spirit of David's thought, "My times are in Thy Hand." First, past time. Whence do we come? Who knows but GOD? The Orientals teach that man's spirit has already had many lives. We doubt this, but we are learning more and more how closely we are bound to the unknown past. The Psalmist believes that GOD's eye marked and watched him, and that His Hand moulded his frame, yet unborn; but modern science leads us much farther back, and tells us that our passions, our tastes, our talents, our infirmities, are due to heredity, to far-off ancestry and prehistoric influences. What new force does this give to the thought, "My times are in Thy Hand"! I am not, then, a waif, thrown out by accident, the creature of caprice, a thing of the moment. My beginnings are far away in the dim, unrecorded past. Nature travailed in birth of me, under His laws, through long centuries. My escutcheon has many quarterings. I was very old before I was young. By the will of GOD I am what I am.

But presently my own will began to act. GOD gave me myself, and bade me, if I would be wise and well, bend my will to His will, follow His leading. I was in His Hands, His child, His servant, His creature, but free to wrench myself away if I would.

Look back on past years, and see the Hand of GOD in all and in each. And if we could know as we are known, how much more should we see! How truly should we find that our time was in His Hand!

Our present time—this too is in the Hand of GOD. Alas, how little have we learned by past experience! How small our store of wisdom! How strong is

passion and mere human nature! How weak the spiritual sight that should see GOD always! Pleasure and prosperity, trouble and suffering, seem alike and equally to make us forget GOD and our dependence. Is the keynote of our life, "My times are in Thy Hand"? Do we believe it? Do we wish it? Does it one while restrain our wantonness, another while comfort us and lift up our sinking hearts? The human spirit rebels against it. The spirit of the age is clean contrary to it:—

"Here's the world half blind
With intellectual light, half brutalised
With civilisation, having caught the plague
In silks from Tarsus, shrieking east and west
Along a thousand railroads, mad with pain,
And sin too."

It needs a strong faith to-day, a firm and practised Christianity, to enable a man to say, "My times are in Thy Hand," and to live consistently with this maxim of life. It seems sometimes as if things went by chance. Men talk of their good or bad luck. But the faithful servant of GOD cannot speak so, and so the Septuagint translators rendered these words, "My lots are in Thy Hand," as if to controvert all idea of blind accident in the affairs of life. "The lot is cast into the lap, but the disposing thereof is of the LORD."

No one pretends to understand the mysteries of GOD'S providence. They are too hard for the wisest, and had better be left. The only attitude here, as in so many circumstances of life, is the child-like spirit that our LORD commends, the spirit of trust in a Wiser than ourselves, in One Who loves us, Who is guiding us by the best way, though the way may be rough and painful and weary, and full of what seem to be mere traps to make us fall, as they do:—

“ I do not ask, O LORD, that Thou shouldst shed
 Full radiance here ;
 Give but one ray of peace, that I may tread
 Without a fear.
 I do not ask my cross to understand,
 My way to see ;
 Better in darkness just to feel Thy Hand
 And follow Thee.”

For,

“ GOD, in cursing, gives us better gift
 Than men in benediction.”

It is very humiliating to human pride ; it is irksome almost beyond endurance to the human spirit that craves for liberty, thus to yield oneself blindly, unresistingly, to the guiding of GOD’S Hand, to uncomplaining suffering, to disappointed hopes, to crushing surprises ; yet this is the result of faith in GOD ; this is the attitude of godly men in all ages ; this is the force of the utterance, “ My times are in Thy Hand.”

It is not fatalism, the dreary creed of the Stoic, of Mahomet, of Calvin, of the modern materialist. If indeed that were true, then

“ Twere best at once to sink to peace,
 Like birds the charming serpent draws,
 To drop head-foremost in the jaws
 Of vacant darkness, and to cease.”

The Christian believes in no Fates, that compel even the hands of the gods. He does not recognise arbitrary election to salvation or damnation. He believes firmly in law, but he looks up beyond it to a Lawmaker, Whose hands are not tied, Whose will is free, Whose justice is perfect, Whose love is infinite, Whose mercy endureth for ever.

From present time to future time the transition is easy and natural. The same faith is held with respect to both, “ My times are in Thy Hand.” This psalm has, from the earliest ages, been used

at Compline, the last daily office of prayer, said just before retiring to sleep, the ever-recurring type of death. The future is unknown, and seems to be utterly out of our power, specially, solely, as some think, in GOD'S Hands alone; and yet this is not strictly so. "The past bears in her arms the present and the future." "The future does not come before to meet us, but comes streaming up from behind over our heads."

Do we not tell our children, "Your future is in your own hands"? Has it not been truly said, "The boy is father to the man"? Does not Holy Writ declare, "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he reap"? We speak lightly sometimes of years that are past and "gone." They are not gone. They live still in the present, and will live in the future. It is true to-day, and it will be true at the hour of death and at the Day of Judgment, "My past time is in Thy Hand." We were writing our future history by yesterday's acts. Nothing is lost, nothing is forgotten, nothing is without results and consequences. We are "workers together with GOD;" neither He alone, nor we alone. Where the lines are drawn that divide His work from ours we know not. Our freedom and GOD'S omnipotence and providence are knit together, as soul and body are knit together. To us the bands seem a tangled maze. It is useless to try and comprehend this mystery. We must just leave it, as we leave the knowledge of the worlds that may circulate round Sirius. We have no faculties adapted for such questions. The well is deep, and we have nothing to draw with.

What then? We come back, as to the future, to where we found ourselves with respect to the present, to the child-like spirit of faith and trust and love; by necessity, by choice.

Whoso loves, believes the impossible. The past

lowers over us, heavy with failure, with sins. It is in the Hands of GOD, out of our reach ; we cannot undo it. What can we do but cry, "Father, I have sinned ; be merciful to me, a sinner"? What can we do but simply believe that "if we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness"?—

"Thrice blest whose lives are faithful prayers."

The future is veiled ; we are stepping on into darkness. We know not what shall be on the morrow. We cannot imagine where and what we should be an hour hence, if we were to die at this moment. What rest, then to be able to say, "My times are in Thy Hand"! My GOD, my Saviour, my Father, I am Thine ; I commit myself to Thee, for to-morrow, in life, in death, for eternity !

Twenty-third Sunday after Trinity.

CÆSAR'S IMAGE, AND GOD'S IMAGE.

THERE are two occasions recorded in the Gospels where our LORD was questioned respecting the paying of tribute, and on both occasions an attempt was made by His enemies to betray him into taking action that would have been used against Him.

The first trap that was laid for Him was with regard to the tax that had been levied for the support of the Temple services, and which had taken the place of the free-will offerings of the people, which in better days had supplied all that was wanted. A certain party among the stricter Pharisees objected to this tax, and it was hoped, by those who wished our LORD ill, that they might be able to represent Him as belonging to this faction, that so He might be placed in a minority and in opposition to the rulers and the majority of the devout Jews. We know how our LORD by a most unusual miracle supplied the money that sufficed to pay the tax for Peter and Himself.

But the incident related in to-day's Gospel was a deeper and more deadly plot against Him. The Roman dominion was especially irksome to the patriotic Israelite, and an obvious policy for a popular leader to adopt would be to proclaim the people's liberty and to urge them to refuse to pay the Roman taxes. "Judas of Galilee" did this, and tried to become a national hero by raising the cry,

"Down with the Roman tribute!" If our LORD had answered the question put to Him and said, "It is not lawful to give tribute to Cæsar," then these men would have gone at once to Pilate and denounced Him as "forbidding to give tribute to Cæsar, saying that He Himself is CHRIST, a King," and would have got rid of Him by rousing Roman jealousy and vengeance.

But if our LORD had replied directly, as they tried to force Him to reply, that it was lawful to pay the Roman impost, then He would have been held up to popular execration, as no true Israelite, much less the promised MESSIAH, Who should free His people from all usurped dominion, and restore again the glorious kingdom of David and of Solomon.

Here was the dilemma, from which there seemed no escape. Our LORD, however, not only escaped the snare laid for Him, but put His enemies to shame and silence. Instead of answering yes or no, as they thought He would be obliged to do, He said, "Show Me the tribute money." This they unsuspectingly did, and He immediately points to its impress, and asks them what it displays. On the former occasion the coin was the Jewish shekel, coined by themselves, bearing only Jewish emblems. But this "penny," as our translation has it, was a Roman denarius, with the head of Tiberius Cæsar on the obverse, and on the reverse pagan emblems, and the date, "After the conquest of Judæa." This coin was at the time current in the market and in all business, especially in all transactions with the Romans. The nation had accepted it. For, wearied out and almost ruined by factions and party-warfare, a powerful body of Jews had some time before gone to Rome and begged for protection, law, order, and peace. A Roman army had in consequence been sent, and Jerusalem taken. A new province

had been added to the Roman Empire, and as a matter of course the taxes had been levied that were the necessary return for the expenses of protection and the maintenance of a governor and a garrison to keep order.

Our LORD'S act, therefore, simply showed the mixed body of Pharisees and Herodians, who for the moment had set aside their mutual animosity, that they might destroy Him whom they equally hated, that the question put to Him did not require an answer, for it had been answered long ago by their own acts. The hard logic of fact did away with the possibility of opinion. They, not He, had made a bargain, and they were bound to abide by it. They had received the boon they had demanded ; they had no choice but to pay the price which they knew it would cost. They had already said, "We have no king but Cæsar;" He said therefore, "Render to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's." He did not say "Give," make a present. Give what you can give or withhold, as you please ; not *δοτε*, but *αποδοτε*, "Render ;" i.e., repay, restore, pay a debt, give back what is not yours at all, but Cæsar's by right. It is a question of simple honesty, not of liberality, or even of choice.

The men are silenced and shamed, but the Teacher sent from GOD desires something better than this, and so He adds, " Render to GOD the things that are GOD'S." We will not stay to notice the special force of this exhortation as addressed to those who were before our LORD at the moment, nor how it gains strength by its connection with what had immediately gone before ; but we will try and see the perpetual lesson that the words teach, and what the Church would have us learn from them to-day, when she selects them for our especial remembrance and instruction in the Gospel.

Does not our LORD seem, on the face of it, to

imply that there is some sort of analogy between the two acts, the rendering to Cæsar his due and the rendering to GOD what is His? Let us think. Our LORD'S questioner is standing before Him with a Roman coin in his hand, and our LORD is pointing to the coin while He utters this twofold command. Let us too look, and examine the piece of money. It is made of silver, dug out of the ground. The metal is not quite pure, but has a certain amount of alloy in it. It has a conventional, not a real value. Its value also diminishes by use; it gets worn away, so that in time its nominal and extrinsic value becomes still greater than its intrinsic value.

Does not this in a way represent and typify human nature, ourselves? Our bodies are of the earth, and there is a strange mixture in us of good and evil. We hear it said of some that they are "too good for this world," and that something else is required besides purity and rectitude of those who would "get on in the world;" just as it has been found by experience that absolutely pure metal does not answer so well for money as that which has been hardened by some baser alloy. Then again, are not men very generally estimated and valued at their own price, and do they not sometimes pass current, like the coins of the realm, for more than they are really worth? Circumstances, not merit, very often give men place and estimation, and rank and position command respect, which the man in himself in nowise deserves.

So we can understand what our LORD says about the last being first, and the first last, when all things will be laid bare, and the truth alone will be seen, and when the balance of the sanctuary will detect base coins, and the fire will try all things, and sterling metal only will stand the test. So, too, does it not sometimes happen with men as it happens with coins that are much used and long circulated? Does not

mixing with the world and passing through its business and its pleasures and its sins wear off the brightness of simplicity, of truth, of integrity? Does not the conscience become deadened, and the moral standard get lowered, and the whole tone and value of the man become depreciated, and many an indelible mark deface the fair fame, till the man in heart sadly realises that he is not, and can never be again, what he once was, and what some others are; that purity has been lost, and that the knowledge of and contact with sin is injurious and debasing; and that, though repentance may save the man from ruin, he can never take the place that might once have been his, the place that is near to GOD, and is reserved for the pure in heart who have kept themselves unspotted by the world?

But we must look at the "penny" again, for it has still more to teach us about ourselves. It bears the image of the king. And what are we told of man at the beginning but that he was made in the image of GOD? But man fell. The image and likeness were defaced, and when he desired restoration he could find no way to it. The original die was lost. Good men searched earnestly for it, but could not find it. All the varied religious systems were the result of this—searching for the die, trying to find a perfect model, a rule of life, a standard of human excellence.

But at last, in the fulness of time, it was given to the world by GOD. CHRIST came a Man, yet the image of the invisible GOD, perfect Man, in Whom, as in Adam at the beginning, GOD was well pleased. And by being conformed to His likeness man is restored to his lost estate, the worn and battered coin is recast in the original die, and the sin-debased soul is born again, renewed, regenerated.

And so the "superscription" finds its parallel. First and by right the soul belongs to CHRIST, for He

is King ; King, as LORD of all ; King, upon the Cross, when He purchased to Himself a Kingdom ; King, when, as St. John saw Him in visions of that which shall be hereafter, He is crowned King of kings and LORD of lords, adored by all, when all kingdoms have become the Kingdom of GOD and of His CHRIST. And then by our union with CHRIST this title belongs to us also. The godly man is not only "lord of himself," a king, ruler, and conqueror, who has successfully rebelled against the Prince of this world, but this title of king is by an apostle ascribed to GOD'S people, and they are told that they shall reign with CHRIST in His Kingdom.

So the date upon the coin has also its counterpart, for all the hope of the world, and the hope of every individual soul, dates from Anno Domini, the year of our LORD'S victory over our enemies, sin and Satan and death.

Now, then, we can see the force of our LORD'S second command, and how it runs step by step with the former command. "Render to GOD the things that are GOD'S," He says, for the same reasons, in the same way, under the same circumstances, as those men were bound to render to Cæsar the things that were already his by right.

We belong to GOD ; for we are His creatures ; His by right of mastership, of ownership ; His because He has called us into being, and because by His will alone we exist each moment and do not drop into nothingness ; more absolutely His than the vessel belongs to the potter who makes it, and can unmake it, destroy it, or turn it into something else.

There is nothing within our cognisance that exactly and fully represents the relation of a creature to its Creator. His rights over us are absolute, and we have no rights at all. Only it has pleased GOD to give us Free Will, that we may dispose of ourselves

as we like; and our wisdom, our happiness, as well as our duty, is to render ourselves, body, soul, and spirit, which are GOD'S, to Him. Already by nature we bear the image of GOD; already we are His by creation. But we are twice His. He has redeemed us, purchased us back from self-imposed slavery and captivity, by His death; and in token of this we bear His superscription, the symbol of allegiance, the badge of our service. The Cross is upon our foreheads, visible still to Him and to the holy angels.

And now our life-work is to conform ourselves more and more to His likeness, to live in Him, to be crucified with Him, to rise with Him, and live in newness of life, rendering ourselves a free-will offering, a sacrifice wholly His; "that we, beholding with open face the glory of the LORD, may be changed into the same image, from glory to glory, by the Spirit of GOD." Even the body itself, as St. Paul tells us in the Epistle to-day, shall be fashioned like the risen Body of CHRIST, so that all the sons of GOD shall have the likeness of the Family in heaven; though some shall display the likeness, as it were, in gold, some in silver, and some of us, alas! probably in yet poorer metal. But all will be gathered in to the treasury of GOD, and each will count for one, though it be but one of the two mites that make a farthing.

Twenty-fourth Sunday after Trinity.

THE CHURCH'S HUSBANDRY.

THE Church reckons her Seasons, not from the natural year, but from the life of her LORD. His Birth she takes as her new year, only anticipating it with four weeks of preparation, mindful of His second coming while she commemorates the first. There is no interim in her work and testimony; the completion of one work is but the beginning of another. When her message is given and finished, she turns back to its beginning and commences it again.

In the old ritual of France the herald stood at the grave of his deceased lord and proclaimed aloud, "The King is dead!" but then he added immediately, "God save the King," for the King still lived in his son and successor. So the Church follows her LORD yearly from Bethlehem to Calvary, and then presently returns again to Bethlehem, thus ever walking in her LORD'S steps, and waiting and witnessing till her time has been completed and her LORD Himself comes to relieve her of her watching. The sun's regular course through the heavens, day by day and year by year, is an ever-present type of CHRIST, "the Light of the world;" and the moon, duly following, waxing and waning, deriving all light from the sun, and shedding it down upon the earth, has ever seemed to devout minds to be a type of the Church, which has received all from her

LORD, and bears witness to Him even when He is unseen.

At the Creation it was said that the sun, moon, and stars should be for signs, as well as for seasons. We Christians know partly now what that means, and doubtless we have yet more to learn; for in all prophecies of things to come the sun and moon and stars are ever introduced, and play their part in the mystic circumstances. But, as ever, the type fails to give the fulness of the antitype. When the covenant of Creation was renewed after the Flood, it was promised that "while the earth remaineth, seed-time and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night, shall not cease." When GOD made His special covenant with Israel, larger promises still were given: "I will give rain in due season, and the land shall yield her increase, and the trees of the field shall yield her fruit, and your threshing shall reach into the vintage, and the vintage shall reach into the sowing-time;" and to-day we read in Amos a promise yet more wonderful: "Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that the plowman shall overtake the reaper, and the treader of grapes him that soweth seed." This, surely, is something more than abundance of the fruits of the earth; there is here some higher kingdom than that of Israel, some better harvest than that of corn, some vine more fruitful than that of Eschol. Let us search and look; there is treasure hid here in this old field; let us take the Gospel-candle and search this house, which its former tenants have left; they were driven out in shame and poverty and haste, but it may be they have left things precious concealed behind them, which we may make our own merely by the pains and trouble of searching diligently for them.

The first thing that we notice as we begin to search diligently is this, that these last five verses

in Amos are quite different from all the book besides ; every word that precedes them is threatening of ruin and punishment. There is nothing but shame, disgrace, and hopeless destruction prophesied till we come to the eleventh verse of the ninth and last chapter ; then come promises, as wonderful and boundless as were the threatenings of judgment before. Next we find that Amos prophesied not at Jerusalem, but at Samaria. His message was to the rebel government and the schismatic Church that Jeroboam the son of Nebat had set up ; and yet the promise is made to David's seed, that his severed kingdom shall be restored, and that, too, not by the recovery of Samaria only, but by the possession of the lands of the heathen, and specially of that vainly desired Edom of which David had hopelessly spoken, "Who will bring me into the strong city ? who will lead me into Edom ?"

Now, it is evident that no mere historical events can satisfy the requirements of these prophecies. We must search elsewhere for the meaning and fulness of GOD'S Word, which cannot fail or return unto Him void ; and we must remember that GOD'S ways are not our ways, nor His thoughts our thoughts. Turn we, then, to the Gospels, and we soon find one incident there recorded that seems to be connected with this prophecy by more links than one. The scene is laid again in this same Samaria where Amos prophesied. There stands One by Jacob's well, talking first with a Samaritan woman, then with His disciples ; and hear what He says, "Say ye not there are yet four months, and then cometh harvest ; behold, I say unto you, Lift up your eyes and look on the fields, for they are white already to harvest." Four months was the time from sowing to reaping. The sower had but just done his work, but now the reaper is said to be overtaking him. For the Word had been sown ; it

was already springing up, and bringing forth fruit, thirty, sixty, a hundred fold, among those Samaritans who believed ; the first-fruits of the Gospel beyond the pale of the Jewish Church. And this new Ruler, Who had suddenly come to power in Samaria, was the promised "Son of David." Thus, then, was the prophecy fulfilled at Samaria. But not there only. Turn to the Book of the Acts. It is the feast of Pentecost, the annual great harvest-home of Israel ; and what do we see ? Peter preaching to the people, the sower sowing the Word, and the same day three thousand souls added to the Church. What is this again but the reaper following the sower, the ploughman overtaking the reaper ? And so, indeed, the apostles considered it, for a little farther on St. James quotes the beginning of this very prophecy of Amos, and applies it to the spiritual kingdom of CHRIST then beginning to come with power.

And if we would know what vine it is that thus yields her fruit so lavishly, beyond all that nature can show, again the Gospel will tell us ; for there is One who says, "I am the Vine ; ye are the branches ; he that abideth in Me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit." The vintage is like the harvest, plenteous, manifold, constant.

Such, then, is the work of the Church in the world. All the operations are going on at once—sowing, reaping, and ploughing ; planting vines and treading grapes. Look out into the world and see the work of the Church in it. Here is a sinful man turned back by affliction, by sickness, or some other merciful dealing of GOD, beginning the long-neglected work in the waste and barren vineyard of his heart. There is another, every day bearing much fruit, blessed and a blessing. Here is the babe newly born to GOD by the mystery of CHRIST'S own ordering, and before the world could defile it, or the flesh spot its pure robe, or Satan lay a finger upon

it, it is carried by angels to Paradise, for ever to be with its Heavenly Father. Here CHRIST by His minister receives into His Church the unconscious infant that shall live threescore years and ten. Here He stands by the dying-bed of the grey-haired servant of GOD and gives him "angels' food," "because the journey is too great for him," that he may go in the strength of that meat through the valley of the shadow of death even unto the mount of GOD. Here the great Priest is wedding two souls into one happy unity by the great mystery that was first made known in the pure bowers of Eden. There the same great Master has divided for a time two other loving hearts ; the one is taken, the other left. Oh, strange, oh, sad breaking and rending stroke ! And yet it is well. He who joined together in love hath now in love put asunder. The harvest was ripe, the vintage was come ; the Master of the field, the Lord of the vineyard, has garnered His precious grain, hath gathered into the wine-press the rich clusters. The treading down is sharp for both, for both suffer in the suffering of one, they two being no more twain, but one flesh ; but He Who endured that terrible wine-press alone hath promised never to leave nor forsake those who have after Him to endure it. The grain cannot become bread, the staff of man's life, till it be crushed and ground ; the grape cannot become wine till it has been pressed and the useless husks got rid of; and the souls whom CHRIST loves must through tribulation enter into their rest. He, the Lord and Master, submitted to this ; we too must go by the same road, that we may come where He is. For see what was His own experience. The prophet told that restoration should come through David. He knew not how low the house of David must be brought first ; he knew not that Solomon's gorgeous palace must pass away, and David's Son live in the cottage

at Nazareth, and that thus the tabernacle of David should be raised up, a house not made with hands. Jeremiah's words teach the same thing; the house of David had spread out like a noble and great tree; it was to be cut down even to the root, but from that root a new Branch was to spring forth, and become a great Tree, more beautiful, more fruitful, than the original stem, never to fade, never to be cut down. Just as it was in the miracle; the five barley loaves of the poor lad were taken by the LORD'S will to be the source and means of sustenance and strength and comfort to all that great multitude in their terrible extremity.

Such is GOD'S mysterious way, to bring greatness out of weakness, prosperity out of ruin, good out of evil. David's kingdom fell, but the blessed Son of David arose in David's own city, Bethlehem, to found a new and better and everlasting Kingdom. He too humbled Himself even to death, the death of the Cross, that out of that shameful humiliation He might bring honour and glory and salvation. And as the Master was, so are we, His servants in the world. We are brought low, that we may be exalted; we sow in tears, but the joyful reaper presses on behind, bringing in the sheaves with gladness.

Thus, then, are the words of Amos fulfilled in the Church's year, when the two Advents are commemorated together, the Alpha and the Omega of Christianity; fulfilled in the Church's work: "For all the operations of grace go on in harmony together; each helps on the other. In one the fallow ground of the heart is broken up; in another seed is sown, the beginning of a holy conversation; in another is the full richness of the ripened fruit, in advanced holiness, or the blood of martyrs;" fulfilled in each Christian heart where humility brings honour, where prayer is accompanied or preceded by its answer,

where sorrow is working gladness, and loss eternal gain.

In vision St. John saw the Tree of Life restored to man again, continually yielding fruit; the bud, the bloom, the ripening and the ripened fruit, all present together upon the same stem. The work of the Church in the world, the work of CHRIST in the heart, these are what it means; for in both there is a never-ending circle of blessing, means working into ends, and ends themselves becoming means to other ends.

In the natural world there is life irresistibly pushing forth on every side, and in most varied forms; and He Who does this can do yet greater things than these, and make life more abundant, more prolific, transcending all natural processes. He Who makes the corn slowly to ripen and multiply till the time of harvest comes can, as His miracles show, hasten such processes, or supersede them by higher powers, and give bread to the eater which the sower and the reaper never toiled to win. Is anything too hard for the LORD? He Who is the "Bread that came down from heaven," He Who is "the Vine," can He not feed our souls with heavenly food in that Sacrament which He has appointed? He is wonderful in His works of nature; what must He not be in His miracles of grace? By the former He giveth food to all flesh, bread to strengthen, wine to make glad the heart of man; by the latter He makes "the plowman to overtake the reaper, and the treader of grapes him that soweth seed."

Twenty-fifth Sunday after Trinity.

AUTUMN.

NATIVES of tropical countries tell us that, when they come into our latitudes, they are struck most of all with the aspects of nature in the seasons of Spring and Autumn. Their own climate has nothing of the kind. And even we, who have all our life long seen the wonders of these seasons, and so, in accordance with that strange facility of our nature for undervaluing anything that is constantly before our eyes, have come to take it all as a matter of course, yet we too, if we watch and ponder, cannot but see how much there is to notice and admire and meditate upon in these two seasons. Just now we are in the midst of Autumn; let us try to see what its teachings are.

Autumn is the end of the year, as relates to the operations of nature. The trees have budded and burst into glorious foliage, and have reigned in their beauty their appointed time; and now the leaves have faded, and they are falling to the ground, sometimes in showers, as the chilly wind sweeps them from the nodding branches; sometimes one by one, silently and gently, during the monotonous stillness of the damp grey days. The fruit has passed through all its stages, has ripened and been gathered, or lies neglected and forgotten, rotting upon the ground. The flowers too have had their day, and are passed and gone. The corn and all the varied harvests of the field and garden, all are gathered and garnered:

nature has done her work and closed her book for one of her periods. The whole aspect of Creation indicates an end, rest, almost weariness, after exertion and effort. The wind, after the last spasmotic effort of the equinoctial gales, seems to sink into death. The atmosphere is for the most part thick and heavy; there is a stillness that makes itself felt. The very sun itself seems wearied, as day by day it sets earlier and rises later, magnified and reddened, a lurid ball of languid fire in the cloud-encumbered horizon.

Indeed here is the secret of all; here is the essential characteristic of the season, the loss of the sun's influences, light and heat. Here is the cause of all the features of Autumn; here is the keynote of the teachings of this season. In the words of Solomon the preacher, "If a man live many years, and rejoice in them all, yet let him remember the days of darkness."

If we think of it, the prominent features of autumn are to be found far and wide, in almost all things, and not merely in the face of nature. There is an autumn in the life of man; there is an autumn in the history of nations; there is an autumn in the course of the world itself. We dare not (like some) assume the office of prophet and confidently read the signs of the times, and tell to a year where we are in the vast cycle of the Almighty's plans; but still we might with due modesty point out some signs that seem to be apparent of the autumn of the world. History, past and present events, display to our eyes an autumn for nations. This Book of Ecclesiastes was written in the premature unlovely autumn of the life of the once great and glorious Solomon.

Let us, then, pass by the autumn-tide of nations and of the world, and keep to the more practical thoughts to which the autumn of the life of man naturally gives rise. But, after all, it is a subject

too wide and too deep and too long; we can but hint and sketch and lightly touch in passing what would afford matter for thought for many an hour. And yet perhaps, after all, this is all that is necessary. The analogy between nature's operations and the life of man are patent and acknowledged; it needs but to remind you of what you know so well; the note lies dormant in the string; the lightest touch will make it ring out, and the echoes of Sunday will still live on during the week.

"If a man live many years, and rejoice in them all, yet let him remember the days of darkness, for they are many." Happy those who, taught by the wise, become wise themselves, and in the days of spring and summer remember the coming autumn of life. Happy those who hear and receive the warning that follows those words, "Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth, and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thy heart and in the sight of thy eyes; but know thou that for all these things GOD will bring thee into judgment." Happy those who have not accepted the world's counter-teaching, and have not without hindrance or fear, as the saying is, "sowed their wild oats;" for the seed sown will surely produce its harvest of tares and thorns and thistles in life's sad autumn. "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he reap." "What fruit have ye of those things of which ye are now ashamed?"—

"The thorns which I have reaped are of the tree I planted;
They have torn me, and I bleed;
I should have known what fruit would spring from such
a seed."

And if the young man has not been his own enemy, and with his own suicidal hand sowed tares in his own field in the silent night, while sober men slept that they might be ready to do honest work

the better in the open day, yet still there is another danger. This same Solomon speaks of it thus : "The sluggard will not plow by reason of the cold ; therefore shall he beg in harvest, and have nothing ;" like our LORD'S foolish virgins, begging for oil, and even trying to buy it too late. A wasted life ! Lost opportunity ! The irrevocable, useless past ! What bitter fruit this ! "Apples of Sodom and grapes of Gomorrah" for many a man's autumn ! "Days of darkness" indeed !

The Book of Ecclesiastes is full of such thoughts. Solomon's was a magnificent vocation spoilt, a reckless waste of man's best faculties, of GOD'S choicest gifts. In Ecclesiastes he stands in his autumn dark days, and finds his heart chilled and his affections soured by the retrospect of his experiences. Life has disappointed him. Men and women have deceived him ; the world is to him hollow and profitless, even where it is not actually evil and malicious. He has nothing to show as the nett result of his life ; no fruit gathered, no harvest garnered. He is weary, but not with profitable work ; he has no resting-place, no home, no friend. He is but a hungry, naked, sickened prodigal ; a mendicant whom even his fellow-men reject, to whom nothing now is left but the uncovenanted, undeserved mercy of GOD. "Days of darkness" indeed these ! "Darkness that may be felt" ! Days, alas ! often experienced in the autumn of life by many a man and woman. And if they postpone these days ; if they manage to evade them ; if artificial lights prolong the day seemingly even to the end, surely the days of darkness will come at last, and then will they not be many ? Do we not read of "outer darkness," of the gnashing of teeth there—teeth that would taste of nothing else but what seemed to them the sweets of life—of the bitter, bitter cry, "The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved" ?

But shall autumn days be always so? Are they necessarily sad? Surely not; rather are they intended to be days of glad fulness and thankful, hopeful rest. Will full barns and presses bursting out with new wine make their owner sad? If the sun no more shines so long or so brightly, did not the wise and industrious man work while the days were long and the sun was hot and fructifying? And is not rest well-earned welcome, when that which was attempted is now well done, when that which was laboured for is obtained and the tangible results are in hand?

The 127th Psalm was written by this same Solomon in his wiser and better days; let the calm, trustful, thankful repose of its words teach us the true Christian spirit in the autumn of life. "Peace at the last"—this is his portion; peace and hope; or, as one of the Collects has it, "a quiet mind."

Autumn is the time of decay, yet what one well calls "calm decay" to the Christian who has the "pardon and peace" of GOD. Autumn is the end, yet not the end. We cannot help looking on again to Spring, again to glorious Summer. Even in the "dark days" we remember the bright time past. To us, as to Israel in Goshen, there is "light in our dwellings;" and hope tells us that we shall yet again feel the warm, genial heat of the sun; again watch glorious risings and exquisite settings; again see rich pastures and smiling corn-fields, and the deep blue sea, sparkling and flecked with white, and stretching to the wondrous bow of the far-off horizon; again smell flowers and taste fruit, so wonderfully true always to their proper scents and tastes; again see bright blue skies and the silver moon and the glittering stars, and hear the soft night-wind stir the leaves and break for a moment the delicious silence, till the half-uttered thought possesses us, "O beautiful world! O beautiful

works of GOD! how good, how wonderful must He be Who made you all! If all this that shall pass away is so perfect, what hath He, our Father, prepared for us, His children! What must be our home, what the life where there is neither change nor sin nor death!"

Such are the thoughts and hopes of the Christian in the autumn-tide of life. His life's day is drawing to its close, and he is content. He has worked, and is somewhat weary; he looks on gladly to rest; and faith tells him of the dawning of another and a brighter day; of renewed life and vigour; of meeting again those whom he has "loved and lost awhile" in the darkness; of a higher life, more light, more knowledge, progress, in the presence of GOD, "with Whom there is fulness of joy and pleasure for evermore."



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